

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA
STUDIES IN SACRED THEOLOGY
(Second Series)
No. 35

Saint Gregory the Great's Concept of Papal Power

BY THE
REV. NEIL SHARKEY, C.P., S.T.L.

A DISSERTATION

*Submitted to the Faculty of the School of Sacred Theology of the
Catholic University of America in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Sacred Theology*



THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA PRESS
WASHINGTON, D. C.
1950

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Imprimi Potest:

GABRIEL GORMAN, C.P., Ph.D.,
Superior Provincial.

Imprimatur:

✠ PATRICK A. O'BOYLE, D.D.,
Archbishop of Washington.

Washington, September 23, 1949.

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THE PAULIST PRESS
NEW YORK, N. Y.

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FOREWORD

THIS study contains an extract from the dissertation entitled, *Saint Gregory the Great's Concept of Papal Power*. Copies of the complete dissertation are on file at the John K. Mullen Library of the Catholic University of America.

The purpose of the dissertation is to give a statement of St. Gregory the Great's thought on the power of the Papacy. For although the Petrine office is a Divine commission, there has been, nevertheless, a development in the exercise of authority on the part of the Roman Pontiffs, the successors of St. Peter, and also a development in the exact understanding of the nature of that authority on the part of men. This development consisted in a greater consciousness in the Church of the significance of Divine revelation, not in an increase of revelation; and depended, to a large extent, on the circumstances of time and the rising situations. St. Gregory the Great demands an important place in the history of this thought, for he stands at the end of the ancient period of Church History and begins a new. His teaching demands careful thought for it indicates what went before. Still more, this last of the great Latin Fathers sums up the teaching of tradition, puts into action the principles of his predecessors, and stands as the founder of the Medieval Papacy. As such, he cannot be underestimated or overlooked. The study also separates different elements and formulae, and shows their significance in relationship to the thought of St. Gregory on Papal power and in relationship to the thought of preceding centuries.

The writer wishes to express his sincere gratitude to all those who have assisted him in his work. He is especially grateful to his present Provincial, Very Rev. Gabriel Gorman, C.P., and to his former Provincial, Very Rev. Carrol Ring, C.P., for the opportunity of pursuing advanced study in sacred Theology; to Very Rev. Timothy McDermott, C.P.; to Very Rev. Alexis Scott, C.P.; to the faculty of the School of Sacred Theology of the Catholic University of America, especially to Very Rev. Alfred Rush, C.S.S.R., S.T.D., under whose

scholarly guidance this work was begun and accomplished; to Very Rev. Edmond Benard, S.T.D., and Very Rev. Francis Connell, C.S.S.R., S.T.D., who read and approved this dissertation; lastly to many who by their sincere encouragement have contributed to the completion of this work.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- AAS*—Acta Apostolicae Sedis.
ASS—Acta Sanctae Sedis.
CSEL—Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum.
DACL—Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie.
DAFC—Dictionnaire apologetique de la foi catholique.
DTC—Dictionnaire de théologie catholique.
EH—Enchiridion fontium historiae ecclesiasticae antiquae.
GCS—Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte.
Jaffé—Regesta pontificum romanorum, 2. ed.
LCL—Loeb Classical Library.
Mansi—Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio.
MGH—Monumenta Germaniae historica.
PG—Migne, *Patrologia graeca*.
PL—Migne, *Patrologia latina*.
TU—Texte und Untersuchungen.
ZKT—Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie.

CHAPTER II

ST. PETER IN THE THOUGHT OF ST. GREGORY THE GREAT

ATTENTION has already been directed to St. Gregory the Great's general conception of the Church, and to his positive teaching on the authority given to the Christian community. According to his thought, the Church, founded by Christ and fixed in its final form, is a hierarchical society. As such, it is the body of Christ. In speaking of the authority Christ gave to His society, Gregory insists that the office of ruling, teaching, and sanctifying was committed to a college of twelve apostles. Their power, he observes, has passed on to their successors, the bishops of the *ecclesia*. The inquiry must now center around St. Peter, for it becomes relevant to examine Gregory's understanding of Peter's position among the apostles, and to establish the exact nature of his teaching on the Petrine office.

I. THE PREEMINENCE OF ST. PETER

Gregory, in the first place, attributes to Peter an unmistakable preeminence. This is seen in his designation of St. Peter as the first of the apostles, under the formula: *primus apostolorum*. The expression appears in a letter addressed to John, patriarch of Constantinople. Gregory's intention is to persuade the patriarch not to use the title *universalis episcopus*.¹ He speaks directly of the status of

¹ The title *Oecumenical patriarch*, as used by the patriarchs of Constantinople, dates, as is believed, from the Acacian schism (484-519). An identical title had been given the popes by deacons of Alexandria. Cf. T. Jalland, *The Church and the Papacy* (London 1946), 315. At the time of this schism it meant *imperial patriarch*, expressing the patriarchal primacy of the See of Constantinople and a certain independence of the bishop of Rome. After this schism, the title survived, but had no meaning detrimental to the Papal primacy. It merely implied the patriarchal jurisdiction and honor of the See of Constantinople. St. Gregory the Great understood the title *oecumenical patriarch* to mean universal patriarch and only bishop. From what Gregory

Peter, Paul, Andrew, and John. Christ is the essential Head of the Church; and these apostles are members of the society, even though St. Peter is the *first of the apostles* and the others have a special position in a local community. "Certainly Peter, the first of the apostles, is a member of the holy and universal Church. As for Paul, Andrew, and John, what are they but heads of single groups of people? Nevertheless, all are members under the one Head."²

The formula appears again in a letter written to Theoctista, the sister of emperor Maurice. Peter is the *primus apostolorum* who received Cornelius the centurion into the Church. "Because Peter, acting under the guidance of the Spirit, had entered the home of Cornelius the gentile, the faithful complained and asked him why he had entered the homes of gentiles, eaten with them, and even baptized them. Still the first of the apostles, filled with the grace of many gifts and possessing the power of miracles, replied to the complaint of the faithful with reason, not with a show of power, and explained the matter in an orderly way. . . ."³

There can be no mistake as to Gregory's meaning in using the

says, his predecessor, Pope Pelagius II, had annulled the acts of a synod held in Constantinople because the patriarch had been referred to under this disputed title (*Registrum epistolarum*, V, 44, ed. by P. Ewald and L. Hartmann in the *Monumenta Germaniae historica, epistolae*, vol. I, 339). Pope Pelagius, therefore, seems to have understood the term in a sense similar to St. Gregory. Though Gregory misunderstood the exact meaning of the term, he seems not to have been mistaken as to the desire of the patriarch of Constantinople to exploit any hidden signification. Cf. P. Batiffol, *Saint Grégoire le Grand* (Paris 1928), 205; E. Caspar, *Geschichte des Papsttums von der Anfängen bis zur Höhe der Weltherrschaft* (Tübingen 1933), II, 452-65; L. Bréhier, "Les rapports entre Rome et Constantinople de l'avènement de Grégoire le Grand à la chute de Phocas," in *Historie de l'église*, ed. A. Fliche-V. Martin (Paris 1938), V, 64-9.

² Ep. V, 44 (MGH 1, 340): Certe Petrus apostolorum primus, membrum sanctae et universalis ecclesiae est; Paulus, Andreas, Iohannes quid aliud quam singularum sunt plebium capita? et tamen sub uno capite omnes membra.

³ Ep. XI, 27 (MGH 2, 293): Et quia ex ammonitione spiritus ad Cornelium gentilem fuerat ingressus, contra eum a fidelibus quaestio facta est, cur ad gentiles intrasset et comedisset cum eis, cur eos in baptismo receperet. Et tamen isdem apostolorum primus tanta donorum gratia repletus, tanta miraculorum potestate suffultus querellae fidelium non ex potestate sed ex ratione respondit, causam per ordinem exposuit. . . .

formula *primus apostolorum*. He wishes to indicate that Peter had a preeminence among the apostles. He, for instance, expressly asserts this in a homily on the book of Ezechiel. He mentions that Peter, the *apostolorum primus*, praised St. Paul's exposition of doctrine, even though Paul had stated in his epistle to the Galatians that he had found it necessary, at Antioch, to rebuke the conduct of St. Peter.⁴ Then Gregory comes to a conclusion that expresses the force of *primus apostolorum*. In so far as St. Peter accepted the rebuke of Paul without any complaint, he gave all Christians an example of humility; or, as Gregory declares, he "who was first in the power of the apostolate, was also first in humility."⁵ The truth of this opinion is strengthened by the fact that Gregory knew nothing of the thought, current in Rome at the close of the fourth century, which presumed that St. Peter was the first invested with the apostolate, and the first invested with the episcopacy—a thought summed up in the phrase: *Petrus initium episcopatus*.⁶ Such an opinion was expressed by Pope Siricius in his letter *Cum in unum* of January 6, 386, when he declared: "Cum in unum plurimi fratres convenissemus ad sancti apostoli Petri reliquias, per quem et apostolatus et episcopatus in Christo coepit exordium . . ."⁷ Gregory does call attention to bishop Dominic of Carthage that he should remember the episcopal order in Africa owed its origin to the Roman Church,⁸ nevertheless, Batiffol shows that St. Gregory understood the expression in an entirely different sense. "We have just met at Rome, from 386 to 433, the consecrated expression of the thought that the episcopacy began with St. Peter."⁹ "But, strange to say, the formula *Petrus initium episcopatus* disappears in the fifth century. Pope St. Leo does

⁴ *Homiliarum in Ezechielem* 2, 6, ¶ (PL 76, 1002C).

⁵ *Hom. in Ezech.* 2, 6, 9 (PL 76, 1002-3): . . . qui primus erat in apostolatus culmine esset primus et in humilitate.

⁶ P. Batiffol, *Cathedra Petri, Études d'histoire ancienne de l'église* (Paris 1938), 95 ff.; P. Batiffol, "Petrus initium episcopatus," *Revue des sciences religieuses* 4 (1924), 440-53.

⁷ *Jaffé*, 258.

⁸ Ep. VIII, 31 (MGH 2, 33).

⁹ P. Batiffol, *Cathedra Petri*, 99: Nous venons de reconstruire à Rome, de 386 à 433, l'expression consacrée de l'idée que l'épiscopat a commencé avec saint Pierre.

not know it. St. Caesarius of Arles, in recalling it to Pope Symmachus, used an argument that had been forgotten. In 598, Pope St. Gregory, writing to Dominic, bishop of Carthage, praises him for knowing 'unde in Africanis partibus sumpserit ordinatio sacerdotalis exordium,' and for remembering the origin of their episcopacy, 'officii vestri originem,' in having recourse to the Apostolic See. We are familiar with the terminology, but Gregory has changed the meaning. He has in mind the Christian beginnings of Africa, and holds for certain that Africa owed its first bishops to Rome."¹⁰ From the evidence, therefore, only one conclusion may be inferred, namely, that the formula *primus apostolorum*, in the thought of St. Gregory, signifies the preeminence of St. Peter among the other apostles.

To speak of Peter as *primus* was in keeping with the accepted tradition. Such a thought had a scriptural basis in the gospel text: *Now these are the names of the twelve apostles, first Simon, who is called Peter. . .*"¹¹ Lagrange observes that the use of the word *πρωτος*, in this context, indicates Peter's position of primacy.¹² As to the use of the expression, first of the apostles, in the early ecclesiastical writings, one may recall the words of Peter of Alexandria (d.311): "Thus Peter, the first of the apostles, after being frequently arrested, imprisoned, and treated with dishonor, was finally crucified at Rome."¹³ It appears again in

¹⁰ P. Batiffol, *Cathedra Petri*, 101-2: Mais, chose curieuse, la formule *Petrus initium episcopatus*, à ma connaissance, disparaît au V^e siècle: le pape saint Léon ne la connaît pas. Saint Césaire d'Arles, en la rappelant au pape Symmaque, utilisait un argument oublié. En 598, le pape saint Grégoire écrivant à l'évêque de Carthage Dominicus (*Jaffé*, 1520), le loue de savoir "unde in Africanis partibus sumpserit ordinatio sacerdotalis exordium," et de se rappeler l'origine de leur épiscopat, "officii vestri originem," en recourant au Siège apostolique. Ce langage nous est connu, mais il a changé le sens: saint Grégoire pense aux origines chrétiennes de l'Afrique, et il tient pour assuré que l'Afrique a dû à Rome ses premiers évêques.

¹¹ Matt. x. 2.

¹² M. Lagrange, *Évangile selon Saint Matthieu* (Paris 1927), 195.

¹³ *Epistola Canonica* 9, 9 (PG 18, 484-5). J. Shotwell-L. Loomis, in their work, *The See of Peter* (New York 1927), 94, note, state that this is the first known use of the expression by an ecclesiastical writer. Clement of Alexandria in his *Quis dives salvetur*, 21, spoke of Peter as the "chosen, the pre-eminent, the first of the disciples, for whom alone, along with Himself, the Saviour paid tribute."

the letter of Pseudo-Clement, where the author speaks of Peter as ". . . the first fruits of the Lord's choosing, the first of the apostles. . ."¹⁴ St. Augustine, in turn, spoke of St. Peter as the first of the apostles: "Beatus Petrus primus apostolorum, vehemens Christi amator, qui meruit audire: *Et dico tibi, quia tu es Petrus*,"¹⁵ and, also, as the first of all the apostles; "Apostolum Petrum primum omnium apostolorum meministi in Domini passione fuisse turbatum."¹⁶ The formula is, likewise, known to Pope Innocent I, for he writes: ". . . beatissimo Petro primo apostolorum: *Rogavi pro te, sed moneo te, vel impero ac praecipio, ne deficiat fides tua*."¹⁷ It also has its place in the terminology of Pope Leo I: ". . . primus apostolorum beatissimus Petrus voce Domini dicentis audierit: *Tu es Petrus, et super hanc petrum aedificabo Ecclesiam meam* . . ."¹⁸

A use of the formula by Pope Pelagius II, the predecessor of St. Gregory, is also of particular interest. Writing to the patriarch of Constantinople, Pelagius declares: "Audiamus quod primus omnium apostolorum dicit . . ."¹⁹ An identical wording, except for *pastorum*, appears in Gregory's writings when he declares: "Audiamus quod primus omnium pastorum dicit. . ."²⁰

St. Gregory also uses another expression to indicate the preeminence of St. Peter when he refers to him as the *princeps apostolorum*. His use of this title is extremely common and may be taken as Gregory's favorite designation for the position of Peter among the apostles. St. Peter has a place of preeminence among the apostles because he is the princeps, or prince of the apostles. The significance of this term may be inferred from the fact that the Roman emperor was often called *princeps*. As S. Miller declares: "It was as 'first citizen,' as 'princeps,' that Augustus described himself, and, though the title never became an official one, it was as princeps

¹⁴ *Epistola Clementis ad Iacobum* I (PG 1, 463): . . . Petrus, qui fuit primitiae electionis Domini, apostolorum primus. . .

¹⁵ *Sermo* 295, 1 (PL 38, 1348-9).

¹⁶ *Sermo* 147, 1 (PL 38, 797).

¹⁷ *Ep.* 26 (PL 20, 567).

¹⁸ *Ep.* 156, 2 (PL 54, 1129A).

¹⁹ *Ep.* 6 (PL 72, 741B).

²⁰ *Ep.* V, 41 (MGH 1, 335).

that he was regarded by the Roman citizen and it was as a principate that his office was described by the Roman historian."²¹

St. Jerome spoke of Peter as the *princeps apostolorum* in the first sentence of his *De viris illustribus*: "Simon Peter, son of John, of the province of Galilee, of the village of Bethsaida, brother of Andrew the apostle, and himself prince of the apostles. . . ." ²² Batiffol, speaking of this statement of St. Jerome, declares: "To my knowledge, *princeps apostolorum* appears in 392, with St. Jerome, in the introduction which he devotes to Peter the apostle, and which opens the *De viris illustribus*."²³ It made its appearance in Papal letters at the time of Pope Anastasius I (399-401).²⁴ Subsequently, it was used by Pope Innocent I (401-417),²⁵ and also by Pope Leo the Great.²⁶ After that it appears only infrequently up to the reign of St. Gregory.²⁷

Gregory, in his writings, uses the term as a set formula. Thus, he writes to Gennadius, the patrician and exarch of Africa: "It

²¹ S. Miller, "The Roman Empire in the First Three Centuries," in *European Civilization, its Origin and Development*, ed. E. Eyre (New York 1935), II, 294-5. Cf. Tacitus, *Annals* I, 9; III, 28.

²² *De viris illustribus* 1 (TU 14, 6, E. Richardson): Simon Petrus, filius Ioannis, provinciae Galilaeae, e vico Bethsaida, frater Andreae apostoli, et princeps apostolorum.

²³ P. Batiffol, *Cathedra Petri*, 188: A ma connaissance, *princeps apostolorum* fait son apparition en 392, sous la plume de saint Jérôme, dans la notice qu'il consacre à l'Apôtre Pierre et qui ouvre le *De viris illustribus*.

²⁴ *Ep.* 2 (PL 20, 74-5): . . . sicuti nos in urbe Roma positi, quam princeps apostolorum statuit et fide sua confirmavit gloriosus Petrus. . . .

²⁵ *Ep.* 25 (PL 20, 55A): Quis nesciat aut non advertat id quod a principe apostolorum Petro Romanae Ecclesiae traditum est ac nunc usque custoditur, ab omnibus debere servari. . . .

²⁶ *Sermo* 3, 2 (PL 54, 145-6): Soliditas enim illius fidei, quae in apostolorum principe est laudata, perpetua est. . . . *Ep.* 33, 1 (PL 54, 797): . . . princeps apostolorum plenitudinem fidei brevi sermone complexus, *Tu es*, inquit, *Christus Filius Dei vivi*. . . . *Ep.* 43 (PL 54, 821): Antea et ab initio in iis quae factae sunt synodis tantam nos accepimus fiduciam a sanctissimo Petro et principe apostolorum.

²⁷ P. Batiffol, *Cathedra Petri*, 194: Patronnée par saint Jérôme, par le pape Anastase, par le pape Innocent, par saint Léon, l'expression *princeps apostolorum* reste rare jusqu'à saint Grégoire. Cf. Hormisdas, *Jaffé*, 785; 820. Pelagius II, *Jaffé*, 1056.

has come to my notice that your excellency has done many things for feeding the sheep of Peter, the prince of the apostles. . . ." ²⁸ To Columbus, bishop of Numidia in Africa, he writes: "I exhort you never cease remembering what you promised to blessed Peter, the prince of the apostles." ²⁹ And to Maximus, the uncanonical bishop of Salona, there is the warning: "If you should presume to act in opposition to this (command), anathema to you from God and blessed Peter, the prince of the apostles." ³⁰ Again, one may observe other general statements. One showed love for Peter, the prince of the apostles, in preserving a sincere faith: "Quia sinceritatem fidei et mente servatis et opere, beati Petri apostolorum principis amor qui in vobis est evidenter ostendit. . . ." ³¹ Justice was to be obtained through the intercession of Peter, the prince of the apostles: ". . . interveniente beato Petro apostolorum principe dispensatio iusta perveniet. . . ." ³² It was Peter, the prince of the apostles, who protected the city of Rome: ". . . sollicito debetis aspicere, quanto beati Petri apostolorum in hac urbe protectio est. . . ." ³³ And Gregory relied on the intercession of the prince of the apostles, for, as he declared: "I ask the omnipotent God to protect you through His grace, and keep you unharmed, through the intercession of the blessed Peter, prince of the apostles"; ³⁴ and again: "We confide in the omnipotent God and in the intercession of blessed Peter, prince of the apostles. . . ." ³⁵

²⁸ *Ep.* I, 73 (MGH I, 93): Plurima enim pro pascendis ovibus beati Petri apostolorum principis utilitatibus excellentiam vestram praestitisse didicimus. . . .

²⁹ *Ep.* III, 47 (MGH I, 203): . . . hortor, ut eorum quae beato Petro apostolorum principi promisisti, memor esse non desinas.

³⁰ *Ep.* IV, 20 (MGH I, 255): Quod si contra haec agere praesumpseritis anathema vobis sit a Deo et a beato Petro apostolorum principe. . . .

³¹ *Ep.* VI, 6 (MGH I, 385).

³² *Ep.* VI, 25 (MGH I, 403).

³³ *Ep.* VIII, 22 (MGH 2, 23).

³⁴ *Ep.* IX, 147 (MGH 2, 148): Rogo autem omnipotentem Deum, ut sua te gratia protegat et beati Petri apostolorum principis intercessione a malis omnibus inlaesus servet. . . .

³⁵ *Ep.* IX, 161 (MGH 2, 162): . . . omnipotentem Deum intercessione beati Petri apostolorum principis . . . confidimus. . . . Cf. also: *Epp.* I, 7, 27, 30, 39, 48; II, 2, 32, 46; III, 6, 33; IV, 16, 33, 41; V, 31, 35, 37, 39, 42, 60; VI, 5, 19, 49, 52, 53; VII, 18, 23, 25, 37; VIII, 15, 33; IX, 31, 151, 154, 160.

Furthermore, Gregory's use of the formula *princeps apostolorum* has an unique place in Papal history. As Batiffol observes: "We must come to St. Gregory to find, I do not say frequent, but consistent usage of *princeps apostolorum*. St. Gregory, so to say, cannot speak of St. Peter without attributing that quality to him. The pope who inaugurated the title *servus servorum Dei*, is the pope who wanted to bring out through the title *princeps apostolorum* the dignity and privilege of the apostle whose *cathedra* he occupied."³⁶

From what has been said, therefore, it is immediately evident that Gregory gives St. Peter a special status of preeminence. He is the *primus apostolorum* and the *princeps apostolorum*. These terms portray most clearly the exalted position of Peter among the apostles.

2. ST. PETER AND THE PRIMACY OF POWER IN THE CHURCH

Like the Fathers of the Church before him, St. Gregory indicates in his teaching the proper preeminence of St. Peter in relation to the other apostles. Like them, he also states the exact nature of this preeminence.

In the first place, it is to be observed that Gregory uses scripture as a doctrinal foundation. In doing so, he makes use of the three principal Petrine texts: that of the *Tu es Petrus* (Matt. xvi. 17-19), the *Confirma fratres tuos* (Luke xxii. 31-32), and the *Pasce oves meas* (John xxi. 15-17). To understand the force of Gregory's appeal to these three texts, one must realize the position of the Petrine quotations before his time.

In the second century, there had been an implicit reference to the *Tu es Petrus* by Justin Martyr, when he declared: "For (Christ) called one of His disciples—previously known by the name of

161, 173, 205, 212, 213, 227, 228, 239; X, 16; XI, 16, 26, 52, 59; XII, 2, 7; XIII, 7.

³⁶ P. Batiffol, *Cathedra Petri*, 195: Il faut venir à saint Grégoire pour trouver un emploi, je ne dis pas fréquent, mais insistant, de *princeps apostolorum*: saint Grégoire ne peut pour ainsi dire pas nommer saint Pierre sans lui donner cette qualité. Le pape qui a inauguré le titre de *servus servorum Dei* est le pape qui a voulu relever par le titre de *princeps apostolorum* la dignité et le privilège de l'Apôtre dont il occupait la *cathedra*.

Simon-Peter, since he recognized Him to be the Christ, the Son of God, by the revelation of His Father."³⁷ There had been another allusion to the same text in the *Adversus haereses* of Irenaeus. Speaking of heretics he had stated: "For they have not been founded on the one rock, but on sand, which has in it a multitude of stones."³⁸

It is not to be wondered at, however, that in the second century there is no direct appeal to the Petrine texts to prove either the primacy of St. Peter or that of the bishop of Rome, though even in the second century the See of Rome did enjoy the primacy. In this regard, Jalland declares: "During the second century this primacy was accepted as a matter of practical convenience. As yet no one troubled to ask the reason. Only when questions began to arise, did it become necessary to show that the primacy rested not on the secular greatness of Rome but on the traditional and, as we believe, historical connexion of the Roman see with St. Peter. . . ."³⁹

It was not until later, then, at a time when the Christians tried to give an adequate explanation of their faith, and when it began to be asked why the See of Rome possessed the primatial position, that an appeal was made to scripture and tradition. The power of Peter and the primacy of the bishop of Rome came from a Divine commission. The exercise of this power, and the study of its essence, depended, to a great extent, on the circumstances of the times and arising situations. Furthermore, a too rigid appeal to scripture could not be expected in the second century, as the living oral tradition handed down from the apostles was considered of primary importance, and not just a partial content of the faith embodied in the sacred writings.⁴⁰

In the third century Tertullian gives an explicit use of the *Tu es Petrus* in which he sets forth the prerogatives and power of

³⁷ *Dial. c. Tryph.* 100 (PG 6, 709C).

³⁸ *Adversus haer.* III, 24, 2 (PG 7, 967): Non enim sunt fundati super unam petram, sed super arenam, habentem in seipsa lapidos multos.

³⁹ T. Jalland, *The Church and the Papacy*, 106. P. Batiffol, *Le siège apostolique* (Paris 1924), 1.

⁴⁰ Cf. T. Jalland, *op. cit.*, 106-7.

St. Peter.⁴¹ Here one may recall the words of Jalland: "The earliest writer explicitly to comment on the passage is Tertullian, who . . . plainly identifies the 'Rock' with the person of St. Peter himself."⁴² According to one view, the *De pudicitia* of Tertullian was written in opposition to Pope Callistus, and from his statement relative to the Petrine text⁴³ one may infer that Pope Callistus had previously made an appeal to the *Tu es Petrus*. In this regard, Batiffol says: "One is able to deduce that Pope Callistus, to justify the power of the keys which he claimed, drew his argument from the text of Matt. xvi. 18-19. This is the first time, says Harnack that such a thing takes place in history."⁴⁴ Others, however, link this up with Bishop Agrippinus of Carthage. Others, furthermore, link this up with an edict of Pope Callistus repeated by the bishop of Carthage.⁴⁵ At any event, it is a stage in the trend of the third century seeking to justify the exercise of power—in this case the power of the keys—through a recourse to the scriptural passages recording the commission conferred on St. Peter. Origen, for instance, had recourse to the *Tu es Petrus* to testify that the Church was built on St. Peter;⁴⁶ and St. Cyprian made use of the two texts, the *Tu es Petrus* and the *Pasce oves meas*, to refer to the commission given to Peter.⁴⁷

⁴¹ Tertullian, *De praescr. haer.* 22, 4 (EH 194). *De pudicitia* 21, 9 (EH 221).

⁴² T. Jalland, *op. cit.*, 97.

⁴³ *De pudicitia* 21, 9 (EH 221): De tua nunc sententia quaero, unde hoc ius Ecclesiae usurpes: si, quia dixerit Petro Dominus: *Super hanc petram aedificabo Ecclesiam meam, tibi dedi claves regni caelestis*; vel: *Quaecumque alligaveris vel solveris in terra, erunt alligata vel soluta in caelis*, idcirco praesumis et ad te derivasse solvendi et alligandi potestatem, id est ad omnem Ecclesiam Petri propinquam?

⁴⁴ P. Batiffol, *L'Église naissante* (6th. ed., Paris 1913), 350, note 1: On peut induire de là que le pape Calliste, pour justifier le pouvoir des clés qu'il revendiquait, tirait argument du texte Mat. XVI, 18-9. C'est la première fois que le fait se produit dans l'histoire dit M. Harnack (*Dogmeng.* t. 14, p. 492).

⁴⁵ K. Bihlmeyer, *Kirchengeschichte I* (Paderborn 1936), 115-6; A. Flèche-V. Martin, *Histoire de l'Église II* (Paris 1943), 78-80; 406-408.

⁴⁶ In *Exodum Hom.* 5, 4 (PG 12, 329). For the different uses of the *Tu es Petrus*, as found in the writings of the Fathers, cf. A. Maas, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew* (St. Louis 1898), 170-184.

⁴⁷ *De habitu virginum* 10 (PL 4, 449A): Petrus etiam, cui oves suas

These important uses of the Petrine texts are to be noted, for in the fourth century Ambrose made use of the entire three texts.⁴⁸ With Pope Leo the Great the three are used by the Papacy itself.⁴⁹

St. Gregory the Great's appeal to the three Petrine texts are to be found in a letter of June, 595, addressed to the emperor Maurice; and in a letter of July, 597, written to Eulogius, the patriarch of Alexandria. The scriptural passages are merely set down. There is no going out of the way to insist that they must be interpreted in such a sense as to bestow a primacy on St. Peter and the Roman See. All that was taken for granted. The statement of the texts stood as a reminder, lest one forget, or overlook, the teaching of tradition or the testimony of scripture.

In his letter to the emperor, Gregory uses the following sequence of thought:

To all who know the gospel, it is manifest that the care of the whole Church was entrusted by the voice of the Lord to blessed Peter, the prince of all the apostles. For to him it is said: *Peter, do you love me? Feed my sheep.* To him it is said: *Behold Satan has desired to sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for you that your faith fail not. And you being converted confirm your brethren.* To him it is said: *You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the*

Dominus pascendas tuendasque commendat, super quem posuit et fundavit Ecclesiam. The primacy text of the *De catholicae ecclesiae unitate*, Chapter four, seems to have been the first original text composed by Cyprian: cf. M. Bevenot, *St. Cyprian's De Unitate, Chapter 4 in the Light of the Manuscripts* (London 1938), 52 ff. Thus the primacy text would read: "Et idem post resurrectionem suam dicit illi *Pasce oves meas*. Super illum aedificat ecclesiam et illi pascendas oves mandat." This is the reading given by M. Bevenot, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

⁴⁸ The *Tu es Petrus* appears in: *Ps. 40, enarr. 30* (PL 14, 1082A). John xxi. 15, and Luke xxii. 31-2: *Ps. 43, enarr. 40* (PL 14, 1109BC). Ambrose seems to have been the first to call attention to the significance of all three texts. Augustine, however, also used the three texts: the *Tu es Petrus* in *Tract. in Ioan. Evan.*, 124, 5 (PL 35, 1973); the *confirma fratres tuos* in *De consensu Evan.* 3, 2 (PL 34, 1160-1); and the *Pasce oves meas*, in *Tract. in Ioan. Evan.* 123, 4-5 (PL 35, 1966-8). John Chrysostom: *Hom. 82 in Matt.* (PG 58, 741); and *Hom. 88 in Ioan.* (PG 59, 478 ff.).

⁴⁹ Leo I, *Sermo 4*, 2-4 (PL 54, 150-2).

kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever you shall bind on earth, it shall also be bound in heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose on earth it shall be loosed also in heaven. Behold, he received the keys of the kingdom of heaven, the power to bind and loose is given to him, the care of the whole Church is committed to him, and also the primacy. . . .⁵⁰

In writing to the patriarch of Alexandria, Gregory declared:

Who is ignorant of the fact that holy Church is established on the firmness of the prince of the apostles, in whose name is expressed the firmness of his mind, being called Peter from rock? To him it is said by the voice of the Truth: *I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven.* And again it is said to him: *And when you are converted, confirm your brethren.* And again: *Simon, son of John, do you love me? Feed my sheep.*⁵¹

Having observed Gregory's references to the three principal Petrine texts, one's attention is immediately centered on what Gregory declares Christ gave to Peter. Five prerogatives are clearly indicated.

First, Gregory assigns to Peter the power of the keys, or as he said: "*Ecce claves regni caelestis accipit.*" In another letter he referred to Peter as the one "*. . . cui claves caelestis regni commissae sunt. . . .*"⁵² Again, on another occasion, he places the power of

⁵⁰ Ep. V, 37 (MGH 1, 321-2): *Cunctis ergo evangelium scientibus liquet, quod voce Dominica sancto et omnium apostolorum principi Petro apostolo, totius ecclesiae cura commissa est. Ipsi quippe dicitur: Petre, amas me? pasce oves meas. Ipsi dicitur: Ecce satanas expetit cribrare vos sicut triticum; et ego pro te rogavi, Petre, ut non deficiat fides tua; et tu aliquando conversus confirma fratres tuos. Ipsi dicitur: Tu es Petrus, et super hanc petram aedificabo ecclesiam meam, et portae inferi non praevallebunt adversus eam; et tibi dabo claves regni caelorum: et quodcumque ligaveris super terram, ligatum erit et in caelo, et quodcumque solveris super terram, soluta erunt et in caelo. Ecce claves regni caelestis accipit, potestas ei ligandi et solvendi tribuitur, cura ei totius ecclesiae et principatus committitur. . . .*

⁵¹ Ep. VII, 37 (MGH 1, 485): *Quis enim nesciat sanctam ecclesiam in apostolorum principis soliditate firmatam, qui firmitatem mentis traxit in nomine, ut Petrus a petra vocaretur? cui veritatis voce dicitur: Tibi dabo claves regni caelorum. Cui rursum dicitur: Et tu aliquando conversus confirma fratres tuos et iterum Simon Iohannis, amas me? Pasce oves meas.*

⁵² Ep. IV, 41 (MGH 1, 277).

the keys amongst the prerogatives possessed by St. Peter: "*Certe etenim Petrus potestatem regni caelestis acceperat, ut quaequae in terra ligaret vel solveret, essent in caelo ligata vel soluta, super mare ambulavit, aegrotantes umbra curabat, peccantes verbo occidebat, mortuos oratione suscitabat.*"⁵³ Finally, one may observe his comment on St. Peter's reaction to the rebuke of St. Paul: "*Behold he (Peter) had been reproved by his inferior and he does not scorn the reproof. He does not remind him that he had been called the first in the apostolate, nor that he had received the keys of the kingdom of heaven.*"⁵⁴

Gregory, then, considers the prerogative of the keys as a *potestas*. According to the image, Peter may be taken as a visible steward; he has the power to open and close the gates of the kingdom of heaven. This prerogative was part of the Divine commission given to St. Peter. In attributing this power of the keys to Peter, Gregory merely followed traditional usage which extended back as far as Tertullian, when the latter expressly declared that it was St. Peter, who was called the rock on which the church should be built, who also obtained the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and the power to loose and bind in heaven and on earth.⁵⁵

Secondly, Gregory asserts that the power of binding and loosing was conferred on Peter: "*. . . potestas ei ligandi et solvendi tribuitur. . . .*" As has been seen, Tertullian also referred to this prerogative. Besides the usage of Gregory, as taken from his recourse to the Petrine text, one finds the same formula repeated when he declares: "*Hortor tamen, ut dum vitae spatium superest, ab eiusdem beati Petri ecclesia, cui claves caelestis regni commissae sunt et ligandi ac solvendi potestas adtributa, vestra anima non inveniatur divisa, ne si hic beneficium eius despicitur, illic vitae aditum claudat.*"⁵⁶ Writing to Constantina Augusta, wife of the

⁵³ Ep. XI, 27 (MGH 2, 293).

⁵⁴ Hom. in Ezech. 2, 6, 9 (PL 76, 1003A): *Ecce a minore suo reprehenditur, et reprehendi non dedignatur. Non ad memoriam revocat quod primus in apostolatum vocatus sit, non quod claves regni caelestis acceperit. . . .*

⁵⁵ Tertullian, *De praescr. haer.* 22, 4 (EH 194): *Latuit aliquid Petrum, aedificandae Ecclesiae petram dictum, claves regni caelorum consecutum et solvendi et alligandi in coelis et in terris potestatem?*

⁵⁶ Ep. IV, 41 (MGH 1, 277).

emperor Maurice, Gregory tells her: "Et in redemptoris nostri largitate confido, quia bonum hoc in serenissimo domino et piissimis filiis, in caelestis quoque patriae retributione recipiatis; nec dubium est peccatorum vinculis solutis aeterna vos bona recipere, quae in causis eius ecclesiae ipsum vobis, cui potestas ligandi et solvendi data est, debitorem fecistis."⁵⁷ Again, writing to Brunhild, Queen of the Franks, Gregory closes his letter with this sentence: "Excellentia ergo vestra ita se libenter in his quae poscimus dignetur impendere, ut beatus Petrus apostolorum princeps, cui a domino Iesu Christo ligandi ac solvendi data potestas est, et hic excellentiam vestram in subole gaudere concedat et post multorum annorum curricula a malis omnibus absolutam ante conspectum aeterni faciat iudicis inveniri."⁵⁸

The terms to bind and loose were, of course, part of the rabbinical language of the Jews. *To bind* was used in the sense of forbidding, and *to loose* meant to permit.⁵⁹ With Gregory, as with St. Cyprian, it was an episcopal *potestas*,⁶⁰ for the bishops inherit it from the apostles: "Horum profecto nunc in Ecclesia episcopi locum tenent. Ligandi atque solvendi auctoritatem suscipiunt, qui gradum regiminis sortiuntur."⁶¹ As for St. Peter himself, the power of the keys implied a power to bind and loose for the kingdom. Gregory makes a connection between these two powers when he declares: "Certe etenim Petrus potestatem regni caelestis acceperat, ut quaequae in terra ligaret vel solveret, essent in caelo ligata vel soluta. . . ." ⁶² Likewise, one was to remain united to the Roman Church, the *beati Petri ecclesia*, lest Peter close the entrance to eternal life. One was to remember that Christ had given Peter the keys to the heavenly kingdom and the power to bind and loose": . . .

⁵⁷ Ep. V, 39 (MGH 1, 326).

⁵⁸ Ep. VI, 5 (MGH 1, 384).

⁵⁹ Cf. P. Batiffol, *L'Église naissante*, 108.

⁶⁰ J. Chapman, *Studies on the Early Papacy*, 32: ". . . the text Matt. xviii. 18 is the charter of moniscopacy entirely apart from any consideration of Peter possessing his powers alone for a certain period. The power given to Peter of binding and loosing is the episcopal power."

⁶¹ Hom. in Evan. 2, 26, 5 (PL 76, 1200A).

⁶² Ep. XI, 27 (MGH 2, 293).

cui claves caelestis regni commissae sunt et ligandi ac solvendi potestas adtributa. . . ."

The third prerogative given to St. Peter was the commission to care for the Church, or as Gregory declares: ". . . cura ei totius ecclesiae . . . committitur . . ." This right to care for the Church expresses Peter's position of supreme ruler. He was its supreme pastor: ". . . pastor ecclesiae apostolorum princeps. . . ." ⁶³ Creatures had been committed to his charge: ". . . cui a Domino creaturae sunt traditae . . ." ⁶⁴ Likewise, he was to bring the Church, pictured under the image of a net, to the shores of eternity, for as Gregory states in a homily on the gospel:

Having taken such a great number of fish, *Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net onto the land*. Now I am sure you notice why it is that Peter brings the net to the land. Indeed, Holy Church has been committed to him. To him especially does the Lord say: *Simon, of John, do you love me? Feed my lambs*. What, therefore, was set forth afterward in word, is now signified in work. ⁶⁵

The fourth prerogative denoted in his letter to the emperor is that of the *primacy*, or, as the statement was expressed: ". . . ei . . . principatus committitur . . ." If one merely considers this prerogative in relation to Peter's right to care for the Church, the nature of the *principatus* may be specified. It certainly must involve a *potestas* and indicate a primacy of power. Further examination will confirm this. For example, Gregory refers to this *principatus* in his *Moralia*. He clearly indicates that the *principatus* involves a position of power. St. Peter, as Gregory says, may be taken as a good example of the proper exercise of ecclesiastical power (*potesta-*

⁶³ Ep. XI, 27 (MGH 2, 294). Cf. also: Hom. in Evan. 2, 30, 11 (PL 76, 1225B); Hom. in Ezech. 2, 10, 16 (PL 76, 1067B).

⁶⁴ Ep. IX, 160 (MGH 2, 160).

⁶⁵ Hom. in Evan. 2, 24, 4 (PL 76, 1185D): Captis autem tam magnis piscibus, *Ascendit Simon Petrus, et traxit rete in terram*. Iam credo quod vestra charitas advertat quid est quod Petrus rete ad terram trahit. Ipsi quippe sancta Ecclesia est commissa, ipsi specialiter dicitur: *Simon Ioannis amas me? Pasce oves meas*. Quod ergo postmodum aperitur in voce hoc nunc signatur in opere.

tis ecclesiasticae exempla), for though he had received the *principatus*, he did not allow Cornelius to display any extraordinary veneration toward him.⁶⁶

In his *Pastoral Rule* St. Gregory again speaks of this *principatus*. In this instance his immediate endeavor is to inculcate a harmony between the exercise of authority and the practice of humility. According to nature, as he points out, all men may be said to be equal. One, then, who comes to the office of rule in the Church should remember this *aequalitatem conditionis* as well as his *potestatem ordinis*.⁶⁷ Explaining this, Gregory states:

But we understand this difference much better if we study the examples given by the first pastor. For Peter holding the primacy of the holy Church through the authority of God refused to receive immoderate honor from Cornelius, who acted well and humbly bowed down before him, and Peter acknowledged that he was like him by saying: *Stand up, and do not do it; for I am also a man*. However, when he discovered the sin of Ananias and Saphira, he at once showed how great was the power whereby he had been placed over all the others. By a word he took away their lives, having read their hearts through the discerning of the spirit. He recalled that he had the chief power in the Church against sins, though he did not call this to mind before his virtuous brethren when honor was forced upon him. In the first instance the holiness of the action merited a sharing of equality; in the other his avenging zeal proclaimed his right of authority.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ *Moral.* 26, 26, 45 (PL 76, 376A): Quam discretionem plenius cognoscimus, si etiam potestatis ecclesiasticae exempla cernamus. Petrus namque, auctore Deo, Ecclesiae principatum tenens a bene agente Cornelio, et sese ei humiliter prosternente, immoderatus venerari recusavit, seque illi similem recognovit, dicens: Surge, ne feceris, et ego ipse homo sum. Acts. x. 26.

⁶⁷ *Reg. Past.* 2, 6 (PL 77, 34C). Cf. E. Caspar, *Geschichte Des Papsttums* (Tübingen 1933), II, 361, n. 3; 380.

⁶⁸ *Reg. Past.* 2, III (PL 77, 36AB): Sed hanc discretionem plenius agnoscimus, si Pastoris primi exempla cernamus. Petrus namque auctore Deo sanctae Ecclesiae principatus tenens, a bene agente Cornelio, et sese ei humiliter prosternente, immoderatus venerari recusavit, seque illi similem recognovit, dicens: Surge, ne feceris, et ego ipse homo sum (Acts 10: 26). Sed cum Ananiae et Saphirae culpam reperit (Acts 5: 5), mox quanta potentia super ceteros excrevisset ostendit. Verbo namque eorum vitam perculit quam spiritu perscr-

From this, then, it is to be deduced that Peter's prerogative of the *principatus* is a primacy of power. It is as Gregory declares "supreme within the Church." The same teaching is stated in a homily on the prophet Ezechiel when Gregory asserts: "He (Peter) who was first in the power of the apostolate (in apostolatus culmine) was also first in humility."⁶⁹

The term *principatus*, as Batiffol remarks, "designates a power, which in its order, is supreme. St. Leo qualifies the power of the emperor as the *principatus*."⁷⁰ Augustine had used it in reference to Peter, when he said: "Petrus . . . apostolatus principatum tenens."⁷¹ One finds a similar statement given by St. Leo the Great: "Cum enim beatissimus Petrus apostolicum a domino acceperit principatum . . ."⁷² The designation *principatus* had its place in the ecclesiastical terminology of the fifth century, and was continually employed from then on to designate the primacy of St. Peter among the apostles and the primacy of the bishop of Rome. The *principatus* of Peter and the Roman pontiff was taken as analogous to the *principatus* of the emperor.⁷³ An equivalent term to *principatus*, when used in the same context, was the expression *primatus*. This formula appears as far back as the writings of St. Cyprian.⁷⁴ Gregory, as has been shown, states that Peter received

tante deprehendit: et summum se intra Ecclesiam contra peccata recoluit, quod honore sibi vehementer impenso coram bene agentibus fratribus non agnovit. Illic communionem aequalitatis meruit sanctitas actionis, hic zelus ultionis ius aperuit potestatis. Cf. W. Wisbaum, *Die wichtigsten Richtungen und Ziele der Thätigkeit des Papstes Gregors des Grossen* (Köln 1884), 14.

⁶⁹ *Hom. in Ezech.* 2, 6, 9 (PL 76, 1002-3): . . . qui primus erat in apostolatus culmine esset primus et in humilitate.

⁷⁰ P. Batiffol, *Cathedra Petri*, 83: Le mot principatus désigne un pouvoir qui, dans son ordre, est suprême. Le pouvoir de l'empereur est qualifié par saint Léon de principatus (S. Léon, *Sermo XXXVI*, 3). P. Batiffol, *op. cit.*, 83: La première fois que principatus est appliqué au Siège apostolique, c'est, à notre connaissance, par le pape Boniface, 11 Mars 422. . . . *Jaffé*, 364: Ideo tenet sedes apostolica principatum ut querelas omnium licenter acceptet.

⁷¹ Augustine, *Sermo* 76, 3 (PL 38, 480). P. Batiffol, *Le Catholicisme de Saint Augustin* (2nd. ed. Paris 1929), 194, n. 3: Principatus doit être synonyme de primatus.

⁷² Leo, *Ep.* 9, prol. (PL 54, 630). P. Batiffol, *Cathedra Petri*, 84 ff.

⁷³ P. Batiffol, *Cathedra Petri* 86 ff. Cf. *Jaffé*: 636, 664, 744, 898.

⁷⁴ Cyprian, *De catholica ecclesiae unitate* 4: . . . sed primatus Petro

the *principatus*; but he does use the term *primatus* in reference to the African primates. This dignity of primate Gregory calls the *culmen primatus*,⁷⁵ though it is at once evident that Gregory realized the dignity of a primate was not to be compared to the primacy of Peter and the Roman See.

Having given attention to the four privileges listed in Gregory's letter to the emperor, the fifth prerogative is taken from his letter to the patriarch Eulogius. The Church, as Gregory declared, is fixed in the solidity of St. Peter; and the solidity of Peter is determined by the fact that he had been called by a name designating a rock: "Quis enim nesciat sanctam ecclesiam in apostolorum principis soliditate firmatam, qui firmitatem mentis traxit in nomine, ut Petrus a petra vocaretur?" As to the first part of Gregory's statement, it is interesting to notice the similarity of expression used by St. Leo the Great: "Ne immerito beatus est pronuntiatus a Domino, et a principali petra soliditatem et virtutis traxit et nominis . . ." ⁷⁶ As to the second part, a parallel wording is found in St. Augustine's writings: "Petrus a petra cognominatus."⁷⁷

This prerogative distinguishes Peter as the foundation of the Church, for it is fixed in the solidity of the *princeps apostolorum*: "... sanctam ecclesiam in apostolorum principis soliditate firmatam . . ." When it is recalled that Gregory teaches that the Church is founded on the *solidity of faith*,⁷⁸ the inference can only be that the Petrine office has been established to protect this *fidei soliditatem*. The solidity of faith is to be found rooted in the Roman Church, the *ecclesia beati Petri apostolorum principis*; and one who adheres to its faith, remains firm in the confession of blessed Peter. It is only in the light of this that one can understand the words addressed to Queen Theodelinda of the Lombards:

datur. . . . This is the primacy text as given by Bevenot, *op. cit.*, 40. Cf. also: Cyprian, *Ep.* 71, 3 (CSEL 32, 773, W. Hartel).

⁷⁵ *Ep.* 1, 75 (MGH 1, 95).

⁷⁶ Leo, *Ep.* 28, 6 (PL 54, 771 and 773).

⁷⁷ Augustine, *Sermo* 76, 3 (PL 38, 480).

⁷⁸ *Moral.* 35, 8, 13 (PL 76, 757A): "... de qua soliditate Dominus dicit: Super hanc petram aedificabo Ecclesiam meam. . . .

Since, therefore, you know the integrity of our faith from my plain utterance and profession, it is only right that you should have no further doubt or scruple as to the Church of blessed Peter, the prince of the apostles; but persist in the true faith and make your life firm on the rock of the Church, that is, on the confession of blessed Peter, the prince of the apostles. . . .⁷⁹

One, then, can only conclude that St. Gregory sufficiently specifies the preeminence bestowed on St. Peter, the *primus apostolorum* and the *princeps apostolorum*. He endeavors to do so by stating the prerogatives of this apostle. Reducing all these to a unity, it may be said that Gregory assigns to Peter a primacy of power. Peter has the *principatus*; and he is the supreme pastor of the Church.

⁷⁹ *Ep.* IV, 33 (MGH 1, 269): Cum itaque haec ex aperta mea professione cognoscitis, dignum est, ut de ecclesia beati Petri apostolorum principis nullum ulterius scrupulum dubietatis habentis. Sed in vera fide persistite et vitam vestram in petra ecclesiae, id est in confessione beati Petri apostolorum principis solidate. . . .

CHAPTER THREE

ST. GREGORY THE GREAT AS THE SUCCESSOR OF PETER

SUFFICIENT consideration has been given to St. Gregory the Great's conception of the Petrine office. It has been shown that Peter received the *principatus* and the *potestas* to care for the Church. The subject matter now turns directly toward Gregory himself, as the successor of St. Peter and the ruler of the Roman See. The implications of his thesis on Peter must be studied in their consequences as they come into contact with the Papacy.

1. GREGORY THE SUCCESSOR OF ST. PETER

In a letter to Eulogius, patriarch of Alexandria, Gregory states: "Your most gracious holiness has spoken to me in your letters about the *cathedra Petri* of the prince of the apostles, saying that he now sits in it in the person of his successors. . . . All that has been said I willingly accept. . . ." ¹ This text contains two thoughts of paramount importance. The first concerns the words: "de sancti apostolorum principis Petri cathedra." The second thought is found in the sentence reading: "ipse in ea nunc in suis successoribus sedeat."

The formula, *cathedra Petri*, is to be taken in this context as referring to the Roman See, and is synonymous with the expression *Sedes Petri*. In a letter written to Pope Gregory, Eulogius said, as the context shows, that Gregory reigned in the episcopal See of St. Peter, the *cathedra Petri*. Gregory, in answering, acknowledged that he ruled in the *cathedra Petri* as the successor of St. Peter.

As to the early use of the formula, *cathedra Petri*, it is to be recalled that St. Cyprian had spoken of the Church of Rome under

¹ Ep. VII, 37 (MGH 1, 485): Suavissima mihi sanctitas vestra multa in epistolis suis de sancti apostolorum principis Petri cathedra locuta est dicens, quod ipse in ea nunc usque in suis successoribus sedeat. . . . Sed cuncta quae dicta sunt in eo libenter accepi. . . . Rome is the See Peter exalted and the place of his death (Ep. VII, 37, MGH 1, 485): Ipse enim sublimavit sedem, in qua etiam quiescere et praesentem vitam finire dignatus est. . . .

this designation. He called the Roman Church: "Petri cathedram atque Ecclesiam principalem unde unitas sacerdotalis exorta est." ² Firmilian, in a letter addressed to Cyprian, had said in sarcasm that Pope Stephen claimed the *cathedra Petri* through the right of succession: ". . . Stephanum qui per successionem cathedram Petri habere se praedicat. . . ." ³ Optatus, in turn, reminded the Donatists that they could not deny the fact that the *cathedra episcopalem* was first established in Rome by Peter himself. ⁴ Augustine, likewise, declared that the Roman Church possessed the apostolic *cathedram*, to which was connected a *principatus*, perpetual in vigor. ⁵

When Gregory had been deacon to the Roman See, Pope Pelagius II wrote three doctrinal letters to the bishops of Istria in an effort to bring them back to ecclesiastical communion. The second of these contains a direct reference to the *cathedra Petri*, the Roman See, and the statement itself is given as that of St. Cyprian. As such, it is the first known quotation of the primacy text found in the fourth chapter of his *De unitate*. ⁶

The second part of the above mentioned letter of St. Gregory, states that St. Peter still reigns in the Roman See in the person of his successors. Through this thought, Gregory is able to identify himself with St. Peter. Since he possesses the office given to Peter, Peter can be said to live on in his person.

This principle of identification is to be taken as the meaning behind many of Gregory's statements. Thus, to show veneration to him was to show the same veneration to St. Peter, for as he tells Brunhild, the queen of the Franks: "By granting what we ask, may you have a reward from St. Peter, the prince of the apostles, whom

² Cyprian, Ep. 59, 14 (CSEL 32, 683, W. Hartel). Cf. P. Batiffol, *Cathedra Petri*, 36; A. d'Alès, *La théologie de Saint Cyprien* (Paris, 1922), 105 f.

³ Firmilian, Ep. 75, 17 (CSEL 32, 810, W. Hartel).

⁴ Optatus, *De schismate Donatistarum* II, 2 (CSEL 26, 36, C. Ziwsa): Negare non potes scire te in urbe Roma Petro primo cathedram episcopalem esse conlatam, in qua sederit omnium apostolorum caput Petrus. . . .

⁵ Augustine, Ep. 43, 7 (PL 33, 163): . . . Romanae Ecclesiae, in qua semper apostolicae cathedrae viguit principatus. . . . Cf. P. Batiffol, *La Catholicisme de Saint Augustin*, 192 ff.

⁶ Pelagius II, Ep. 4 (Jaffé, 1055). Cf. M. Bévenot, *St. Cyprian's De Unitate*, lxxii.

you with christian devotion venerate in us."⁷ A similar declaration is found in the fourth decree of the Roman synod of July 5, 595, in which Gregory states that the faithful venerate him with the reverence due to St. Peter.⁸ Again, asking the bishops of Gaul to give assistance to Augustine and his companions who accompany him to England, a basis for Gregory's plea is the remark: "We are well assured that out of love for Peter, the prince of the apostles, you will give help to our men."⁹ Writing to Honoratus, the apocrisiarius at Constantinople, Gregory informs him: "My son and lord Venantius, nephew of the patrician Opilio, has come to the apostle Peter, to beseech me to commend his cause to you."¹⁰ Gifts which Gregory would not accept if offered to his person, he would not refuse when offered to St. Peter, or, in other words, to himself as the representative and successor of Peter. In a letter addressed to Bishop John of Prima Iustiniana in Illyricum, Gregory tells him that at first he was unwilling to accept gifts offered him by the representatives of John, because of the afflictions of that church. But the messengers used an argument which made it extremely difficult for Gregory to refuse the gifts. He was constrained to accept them for they told him the gifts were being offered to St. Peter. "I was altogether unwilling to accept the present of your holiness, as it did not seem proper to receive gifts from our plundered and afflicted brethren. But your messengers bettered me through another argument, offering it to one from whom your fraternity's gift could not be withheld."¹¹

⁷ Ep. IX, 212 (MGH 2, 197): . . . et excellentiae vestrae beatus Petrus apostolorum princeps, quem in nobis concedendo quae petimus christiana devotione veneramini recompenset.

⁸ Ep. V, 57a (MGH 1, 364): Sicut indignos nos per beati Petri apostoli reverentiam mens fidelium veneratur, ita nostram infirmitatem decet semetipsam semper agnoscere et impensae sibi venerationis onera declinare.

⁹ Ep. VI, 52 (MGH 1, 427): . . . confidimus, quod amore beati Petri apostolorum principis hominibus nostris vestra devote solacia commodetis. . .

¹⁰ Ep. II, 36 (MGH 1, 132): Filius meus Dominus Venantius nepos quondam Opilionis patricii ad beatum Petrum apostolum venit, hoc a me summo petiturus, ut causam eius dilectioni tuae commendare debuissim.

¹¹ Ep. V, 16 (MGH 1, 297-8): Exenia autem vestrae sanctitatis suscipere omnino nolueram, quia valde esset incongruum, ut a praedatis atque afflictis

Likewise, in showing love and obedience to Gregory, as Roman Pontiff, one proved his love for St. Peter. Thus, Gregory praised the action of Bishop John of Syracuse by writing: "Indeed, as often as your fraternity has opportunity, you do not cease showing love toward the blessed apostle Peter."¹² On the other hand, to injure Gregory in any way was to injure St. Peter: ". . . per nos in beati Petri dixisse fertur iniuria."¹³ In fact, part of Gregory's argument against the patriarch John of Constantinople, in using the title of *oecumenical*, was based on his identity with St. Peter. Perhaps, as Gregory says, his own sins were such as to merit the personal insult given him by the patriarch of Constantinople; but certainly no sin of St. Peter merited an injury.¹⁴

It is from such statements as these that one is able to comprehend his meaning in acknowledging that Peter ruled in the Roman See in the person of his successor. "Here is a pope," as Caspar remarks, "who did not consider it robbery, if one be permitted to accommodate the words of Paul, to liken himself to Peter, though one who also humbled himself."¹⁵ Caspar's words are also to be recalled as he corrects a remark of Harnack: "It is not true that, 'the astounding identification of Peter and the Pope, undergoes a further development with St. Gregory.' This identification was perfect at the time of Leo the Great, and taken for granted by Gregory the Great in such a way that, it is scarcely necessary to give further proof. But he also used it to stress humility."¹⁶

fratribus munera percepisse videremur. Sed responsales vestri alio me argumento vicerunt ad eum illa deferentes, a quo non posset oblatio vestrae fraternitatis repelli.

¹² Ep. IX, 27 (MGH 2, 60): Et quidem fraternitas vestra quotiens occasionem repperit, amorem suum circa beatum Petrum apostolum non cessat ostendere.

¹³ Ep. IX, 44 (MGH 2, 71).

¹⁴ Ep. V, 39 (MGH 1, 328).

¹⁵ E. Caspar, *Geschichte Des Papsttums*, II, 394: Hier war, wenn es erlaubt ist, das Pauluswort zu zitieren, ein Papst, der es nicht für einen Raub hielt, Petrus gleich zu sein, sondern sich selbst erniedrigte.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, note 4: Es ist nicht richtig, dass 'die erstaunliche Identifizierung von Petrus und dem Papst bei Gregor weitere Fortschritte macht' (Harnack, *Lehrb. d. Dogmengesch.*, III⁴, S. 268, Anm. 3). Diese Identifizierung war seit Leo d. Gr. perfekt und somit für Gregor d. Gr. selbstverständlich, so dass

This identification of the Roman Pontiff with St. Peter, as if Peter were still living and ruling, is found as far back as the pontificate of Pope Siricius (384-399). He, on his part, only bears witness to the tradition before him of the Christian conviction holding to the perpetuity of the office given to the prince of the apostles, and inherited and exercised by the Bishop of Rome. The words of Pope Siricius represent the thought of Gregory; and illustrate, once again, that the thought of Gregory on the Papacy is the summation of that of his predecessors.¹⁷ The same is to be said for the similar statements of Popes Boniface,¹⁸ Celestine,¹⁹ Xystus,²⁰ and Leo the Great.²¹ Gregory in his day restates what they said before him. His thought is their thought.

Beyond the description of the Roman See as the *cathedra Petri*, and the added qualification that Peter rules there in the person of his successors, a third factor must be mentioned. If the Roman See, the *sedes Petri*,²² may be referred to as the *cathedra Petri*, of parallel importance in the history of papal thought is the formula *apostolica sedes*.

Any See, founded in apostolic times, could of course be called apostolic, as were Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, and Rome. Ter-

es fast sich erübrigt, Belege anzuführen (vgl. etwa JE. 1360, Reg. V, 37), s. unten S. 454, und JE. 1442, Reg. VI, 58, s. unten S. 461 Anm. 8); aber er gab auch ihr eine Wendung ins Demütige.

¹⁷ Siricius, *Ep.* I, 1 (*Mansi* 3, 655): Portamus onera omnium qui gravantur: quinimo haec portat in nobis beatus apostolus Petrus, qui nos in omnibus, ut confidimus, administrationis suae protegit et tuetur haeredes. Cf. also: E. Caspar, *Geschichte des Papsttums*, I, 266; P. Batiffol, *Cathedra Petri*, 193, note 5.

¹⁸ Boniface, *Jaffé*, 350; 351; 363.

¹⁹ Celestine, *Jaffé*, 385; 388.

²⁰ Xystus, *Jaffé*, 392.

²¹ Leo, *Sermo* 5, 4 (*PL* 54, 154D-5A): Subjungit autem se ad rationem solemnitate nostrae, non solum apostolica, sed etiam episcopalis beatissimi dignitas Petri, qui sedi suae praesent non desinit, et indeficiens obtinet cum aeterno Sacerdote consortium. Soliditas enim illa quam de Petra Christo etiam ipse Petra factus accepit, in suos quoque se transfudit haeredes, et ubicumque aliquod ostenditur firmitatis, non dubie apparet fortitudo pastoris.

²² *Ep.* IX, 228 (*MGH* 2, 225): . . . pallium a beati Petri apostoli sede transmissum. . . .

tullian had, in fact, spoken of apostolic churches.²³ At the time of Pope Damasus, however, the title *apostolica sedes* appeared as a special prerogative of the Roman See. As Caspar remarks: "Damasus I was the first Roman bishop to speak of his Church as *the Apostolic See*."²⁴ Batiffol likewise declares: "Neither St. Cyprian, nor Optatus, gave the synonym *sedes apostolica* to the *Petri sedes*. I do not recall having found this formula used by Hilary, St. Am-

²³ P. Batiffol, *Cathedra Petri*, 151: L'expression *Sedes apostolica* pour désigner absolument le siège de l'évêque de Rome, ne saurait être primitive, pour cette raison que, dans les premiers siècles, on tenait compte des sièges qui étaient apostoliques, et on en comptait plus d'un. Tertullien a sur ce sujet un texte bien connu: "Percurre ecclesias apostolicas, apud quas ipsae adhuc cathedrae apostolorum suis locis praesident" (*De praescr.* XXXVI, 1 ed. de Labriolle, 78), et il nomme Corinthe, Philippi, Ephèse, Rome.

²⁴ E. Caspar, *Geschichte des Papsttums*, I, 242: Damasus I war der erste römische Bischof, der von seiner Kirche als "dem apostolischen Stuhle" sprach. . . . P. Batiffol, *Le siège apostolique*, 199: Dans la pensée de Damase, la communion avec le Siège apostolique est condition de la *catholicorum societas*. P. Batiffol, *Cathedra Petri*, 152-3: Priscillien, dans son *Liber ad Damasum episcopum*, s'adressant à ■ pape, lui dit: "Ad apostolicae sedis gloriam . . . venisti" (Priscillian, *Tractat.*, 11, ed. Schepss, p. 34). Priscillien a dû s'appliquer à parler à Damase le langage qu'il aime. Nous avons, en effet, une lettre de Damase au clergé d'une Eglise d'Orient, sans doute Béryte, en 377-379 où on lit: "Timothée (évêque de Béryte) a été déposé ici par un jugement du Siège apostolique." Et dans la même lettre: "Parce que votre charité rend au Siège apostolique le respect qui lui est dû, vous vous obligez grandement" (Le texte en grec dans Theodoret, *HE*, V, 10, ed. Parmentier, pp. 295-297). Dans la lettre *Ad Gallos episcopos*, que l'on restitue au pape Damase et que l'on date de 374 environ, le pape félicite les évêques gallo-romains de l'avoir consulté: "Sanctitudo vestra ex sedis apostolicae auctoritate sciscitare dignata est. Il parle de la nécessaire communion à garder avec le Siège apostolique: "Hoc quisque facit, sciat se . . . communionem sedis apostolicae non habere iam posse." Il parle de l'autorité disciplinaire du Siège apostolique: "Satis grave est et contra episcopalem moderationem sedis apostolicae" (Coustant, *Epistolae*, pp. 685-700). Voici donc la formule bien entrée dans l'usage de la chancellerie pontificale. Sous Damase, en 378, un concile de toute l'Italie se tient à Rome et adresse une lettre à l'empereur Gratien. On y lit que le concile s'est tenu "ad sublime sedis apostolicae sacrarium," c'est à savoir à Saint-Pierre. On y lit que l'évêque de Rome, égal des autres évêques par son sacerdoce, les dépasse par l'apostolicité de son siège: "quibus et si aequalis est munere, praerogativa tamen apostolicae sedis excellit" (*Coll. Avellan*, 13, p. 56).

brose, nor by Lucifer of Cagliari. It appears with Pope Damasus."²⁵ From the time of Damasus the formula, as a synonym for the Church of Rome, entered into the style of the papal chancery. "Immediately after Pope Damasus," says Batiffol, "*sedes apostolica* becomes a common expression in papal letters. 'Extra conscientiam sedis apostolicae nemo audeat ordinare,' writes Pope Siricius (*Jaffé*, 258). 'Perlatum est ad conscientiam apostolicae sedis . . . ' writes the same Pope (*Jaffé*, 263). And again: 'Statuta sedis apostolicae . . . Apostolicae sedis auctoritate . . . ' (*Jaffé*, 255). It is useless to multiply citations; the fact is established. The formula belongs to the style of the Roman chancery, and shall be perpetuated. But it would be an error to make it the creation of Pope Damasus. One reads, in fact, in the letter *Me frater* of Pope Liberius to Eusebius of Vercellae, in 354: ' . . . fides tua, qua . . . nullo genere a consortio sedis apostolicae discrepasti.' "²⁶

Gregory speaks of the Church of Antioch as an apostolic See in a letter addressed to its patriarch, Anastasius: "Sed memento quia apostolicam sedem regis. . . ." ²⁷ Nevertheless, he understands and accepts the proper limitation of the formula in applying it to the Church of Rome. He writes, for instance, to Anastasius, archbishop of the apostolic church of Corinth, that the Lord has granted him the honor to preside over the Apostolic See.²⁸ It seems the expres-

²⁵ P. Batiffol, *Cathedra Petri*, 152: Cependant ni saint Cyprien, ni Optat, ne donnent à *Petri sedes* pour synonyme *sedes apostolica*. Je ne me souviens pas d'avoir trouvé cette formule chez saint Hilaire, ni chez saint Ambroise, ni chez Lucifer de Cagliari. Elle apparaît avec le pape Damase.

²⁶ P. Batiffol, *Cathedra Petri*, 153: Sitot après Damase *sedes apostolica* devient d'un emploi courant dans les lettres des papes "Extra conscientiam sedis apostolicae nemo audeat ordinare," écrit le pape Sirice (*Jaffé*, 258). "Perlatum est ad conscientiam apostolicae sedis . . ." écrit le même pape (*Jaffé*, 263). Et encore: "Statuta sedis apostolicae . . . Apostolicae sedis auctoritate . . ." (*Jaffé*, 255). Inutile de multiplier les citations, le fait est acquis: la formule appartient au style de la chancellerie romaine, et s'y perpétuera. Mais ce serait une erreur que d'en faire une création du pape Damase. On lit, en effet, dans la lettre *Me frater* du pape Libère à Eusèbe de Vercell, en 354: " . . . fides tua, qua nullo genere a consortio sedis apostolicae discrepasti."

²⁷ *Ep.* V, 42 (*MGH* 1, 336).

²⁸ *Ep.* I, 26 (*MGH* 1, 40): . . . quod licet indignum me apostolicae Dominus sedi praeesse dignatus est.

sion—"indignum me apostolicae Dominus sedi praeesse dignatus est"—should be translated *the* Apostolic See and not *an* apostolic See, for not only was this the common understanding of the term in the West, but Gregory is informing the archbishop that he has been elected to the See of Rome. In this instance, therefore, *sedes apostolica* would be but another form for *Sancta Romana ecclesia*. The parallel expression would be: " . . . in sancta Romana cui Deo auctore praesidemus ecclesia. . . ." ²⁹ It is to be recalled that Priscillian had spoken in a similar manner in his *Liber ad Damasum*: "Ad apostolicae sedis gloriam . . . venisti." ³⁰ Again, Gregory declares, in a letter written to Leander, bishop of Seville: " . . . sedes apostolica cui Deo auctore praesideo. . . ." ³¹ And in a letter addressed to Augustine, bishop of Canterbury, the same formula appears. Here, however, he speaks of serving instead of presiding: " . . . ab hac sancta et apostolica, cui Deo auctore deservio, sede. . . ." ³² His parallel expression to this is: " . . . sanctae Romanae cui Deo auctore deservimus ecclesiae" ³³

There can be no doubt, however, about Gregory's use of the title *apostolica sedes*. He certainly used it in its accepted sense as a synonym for the See of Rome. Many other statements can be understood only when one limits the term to the Roman Church. Just as other churches, for instance, show reverence to the See of Rome, so too, as Gregory says, does the See of Rome exercise a solicitude over these churches: "Quanto apostolicae sedi ab ecclesiis reverentia ceteris exhibetur, tanto eam in earum decet esse tuitione sollicitam." ³⁴ If anyone from the council of Numidia, in Africa, desired to come to Rome, he was to be permitted to do so: "Ex concilio vero Numidia, si qui desideraverint ad apostolicam sedem venire, permittite. . . ." ³⁵ In so far as the See of Rome is set over all the churches, it must be solicitous when its consent is sought for the

²⁹ *Ep.* I, 60 (*MGH* 1, 83).

³⁰ Priscillian, *Tractat.* 11 (*CSEL* 18, 34).

³¹ *Ep.* V, 53a (*MGH* 1, 358).

³² *Ep.* XI, 39 (*MGH* 2, 312).

³³ *Ep.* VI, 12 (*MGH* 1, 391).

³⁴ *Ep.* I, 71 (*MGH* 1, 91).

³⁵ *Ep.* I, 72 (*MGH* 1, 92).

consecration of a bishop: "Quanto apostolica sedes Deo auctore cunctis praelata constat ecclesiis, tanto inter multiplices curas et illa nos valde sollicitat, ubi ad consecrandum antistitem nostrum expectatur arbitrium."³⁶ If a particular church observes the established customs for the consecration of a bishop, the See of Rome will thereby retain its power, and at the same time perpetuate the rights it conceded to other churches: "... quatenus huius modi servata consuetudine et apostolica sedes proprium vigorem retineat et a se concessa aliis sua iura non minuat."³⁷ Gregory assures bishop Columbus of Numida, in Africa, that the letter of the Numidian bishop was an evident sign of his devotion to the See of Rome: "Praeterea tota te mente, toto corde, totaque anima apostolicae sedi inhaerere ac esse devotum et nunc scio, et priusquam epistola tua hoc testimonium perhiberet, manifeste cognovi."³⁸ The canons of the See of Rome were to be observed, or Gregory would take action against the guilty: "In qua si videro, sedi apostolicae canones non servari, dabit omnipotens Deus, quid contra contemptores eius faciam."³⁹ It was the right of the See of Rome to preserve unity throughout the universal Church: "... iustum fuit, ut sedes apostolica curam gereret, quatenus unitatem in universalis ecclesiae sacerdotum mentibus per omnia custodiret."⁴⁰ Gregory informs bishop Leo of Catena, in Sicily, that subdeacons there were to observe the same laws of celibacy as practiced by subdeacons belonging to the Church of Rome: "Sed ad similitudinem apostolicae sedis eos cuncta observare..."⁴¹ When one did not obey the See of Rome, such an action was contempt for the *apostolica sedes*: "... in contemptu sedis apostolicae apertus exilivit."⁴² Gregory further declares that Pope Pelagius II, his predecessor, annulled a synod held at Constantinople in 588. The action is attributed to the See of Rome: "... cuncta acta illius synodi sede apostolica contradicente soluta

³⁶ Ep. III, 30 (MGH 1, 188).

³⁷ Ep. III, 30 (MGH 1, 188-9).

³⁸ Ep. III, 47 (MGH 1, 203).

³⁹ Ep. III, 63 (MGH 1, 224).

⁴⁰ Ep. IV, 2 (MGH 1, 234).

⁴¹ Ep. IV, 34 (MGH 1, 270).

⁴² Ep. V, 6 (MGH 1, 286).

sint. . ."⁴³ And again, it is the See of Rome, the *apostolica sedes*, that is the head of all the churches: "... sede apostolica, quae omnium ecclesiarum caput est. . ."⁴⁴

It may be stated, therefore, that Gregory, as a rule, identifies the formula *apostolica sedes* with the See of Rome. In his thought, the See of Rome was *par excellence* the *apostolica sedes*. In this regard, Batiffol remarks: "Let us say, in summary, that the Romans call the See of Rome simply the Apostolic See. The Orientals found no difficulty in qualifying the See of Rome as apostolic, but with the reservation that the same quality could also be given to other Sees. Constantinople agreed to treat Rome as the Apostolic See *par excellence*; by that, the See of Rome was differentiated from the See of Constantinople, and the endeavors of Antioch and Alexandria to lessen the primacy which the New Rome in the East attributed to itself were also discouraged."⁴⁵

Ruling in this Apostolic See, Gregory considered himself the vicar of St. Peter: "... sedem apostolicam vice Petri apostolorum principis suscepimus gubernandam. . ."⁴⁶ He was the vicar of St.

⁴³ Ep. V, 39 (MGH 1, 327).

⁴⁴ Ep. XIII, ■ (MGH 2, 416).

⁴⁵ P. Batiffol, *Cathedra Petri*, 164: Disons, en manière de recapitulation, que les Romains appellent le siège de Rome le Siège apostolique simplement. Les Orientaux ne font pas de difficulté de qualifier le siège de Rome d'apostolique, mais avec cette réserve que pareille qualité peut être donnée à d'autres sièges. A Constantinople, on accepte de traiter Rome de siège apostolique par excellence, on différencie par là le siège de Rome du siège de Constantinople, et on décourage les prétentions d'Antioche ou d'Alexandrie à faire échec à la primauté que s'attribue en Orient la nouvelle Rome. P. Batiffol, "Papa, Sedes apostolica, Apostolatus," *Rivista di archeologia cristiana* (Rome, 1925), 116: *Sedes apostolica*, pour désigner exclusivement le siège de Rome, es une formule plus jeune que *cathedra Petri* ou *sedes Petri*. Elle apparaît au temps du pape Damase et semble aussitôt consacrée dans l'usage romain, puis en Italie, en Espagne, en Afrique. Elle s'introduit en Orient au temps du concile d'Ephèse, mais elle ne s'y acclimate pas, sans être cependant contestée.

⁴⁶ Ep. II, 46 (MGH 1, 147). Pope Gelasius I had been referred to, at a synod, as the "Vicar of Christ." Cf. *Avel. Coll.* (CSEL 35, 487). Cf. also: A. K. Ziegler, "Pope Gelasius I and His Teaching on the Relation of Church and State," *The Catholic Historical Review*, 27 (1942), 437. Leo, *Sermo* 3, 4 (PL 54, 147): "... cuius vice fungimur. . .". Also cf. W. Wisbaum, *Die*

Peter because he was his successor, just as he spoke of the successor of St. Ambrose in the See of Milan as the "... vicarius sancti Ambrosii. . ." ⁴⁷ His position, then, as Roman pontiff, was one of rule. He ruled the Apostolic See in the place of St. Peter. This, in turn, demanded a proper title of respect, and hence he is addressed as the *apostolicus papa*.⁴⁸

2. GREGORY AND THE AUTHORITY OF THE ROMAN SEE

The importance of Gregory's identifying himself, as Bishop of Rome, with St. Peter, is not to be overlooked in considering the authority of the Roman See. In fact, many of his statements, make sense only if this principle is taken for granted. The prerogatives, then, given to Peter, belong to St. Gregory as the reigning Bishop of Rome. It is in light of this that one can understand the words of Gregory when he says of himself: "We hope in the power of Almighty God and that of blessed Peter, the prince of the apostles." ⁴⁹ He possesses the same authority as Peter, and commands with it. Thus

wichtigsten Richtungen und Ziele der Thätigkeit des Papstes Gregors des Grossen (Köln, 1884), 14.

⁴⁷ Ep. XI, 6 (MGH 2, 266). Cf. P. Ballerini, *De vi ac ratione primatus Romanorum pontificum*, 3.

⁴⁸ John of Ravenna (found among epistles of St. Gregory), Ep. III, 66 (MGH 1, 228): "... ad Gregorium Apostolicum Papam. . . Ep. VIII, 36 (MGH 2, 38): "... beatissimi atque apostolici papae Gregorii. . . Ep. XI, 15 (MGH 2, 275): "... Praesidente beatissimo et apostolico papa Gregorio. . . Ep. XIII, 49 (MGH 2, 413): Dum igitur ex deputatione sanctissimi et beatissimi atque apostolici domni mei papa Gregorii. . . Ep. XIII, 1 (MGH 2, 365): "... domnus beatissimus et apostolicus Gregorius papa. . . Cf. also: Batiffol, "Papa, Sedes apostolica, Apostolatus," *Rivista di archeologia cristiana*, 2 (1925), 99-116. St. Gregory also speaks of having taken over the care of an old and battered ship. Cf. Ep. I, 4 (MGH 1, 5); Ep. I, 41 (MGH 1, 56-7). This ship seems to be the Church. Cf. P. Godet, "Grégoire de Grand," *DTC* 6, 1777; O. Bardenhewer, *Geschichte der altkirchlichen Literatur*, V, 284; H. Grisar, "Der römische Primat nach der Lehre und der Regierungs-Praxis Gregors des Grossen," *ZKT* 3 (1879), 666; A. Cayré, *Patrologie et histoire de la théologie*, II, 232; Abbot Snow, *St. Gregory the Great*, 54. Batiffol, however, is of the opinion that the ship stands for the city of Rome: cf. P. Batiffol, *Saint Grégoire le Grand*, 56.

⁴⁹ Ep. II, 32 (MGH 1, 129): Speramus enim in omnipotentis Dei virtutem et in ipsius beati Petri principis apostolorum. . .

he proclaims: "... ex beati Petri apostolorum principis auctoritate decernimus. . ." ⁵⁰ Again he declares: "... ex beati Petri apostolorum auctoritate praecipimus. . ." ⁵¹

Having spoken of possessing the authority of St. Peter, Gregory proceeds a step further and speaks of the primacy of the Apostolic See. "It is evident to all that the Apostolic See, by the will of God, is set over all the churches." ⁵²

During his reign as Roman Pontiff, an unusual case arose in Spain, which gave rise to a similar statement. The situation concerned two deposed bishops of Spain. The dioceses of these two prelates were within the territory of the Byzantine Empire, the civil governing of which belonged to a *iudex*. This judge had succeeded, acting with the assistance of other bishops, in deposing them. The two deposed bishops then appealed to Rome.

As the dioceses were in a Byzantine province, Gregory drew up a brief, or *capitulare*, of the laws of the emperor Justinian in order to justify his intervention. In the brief, he quotes the ruling that if any cleric or layman brings an accusation against a bishop, the matter is to be referred to the metropolitan bishop and settled according to the sacred canons and laws. If one disputed this judgment, the case was then to be brought to the archbishop and patriarch of the dioceses, who would give a decision according to the canons and laws, and bring the matter to a close.⁵³ "If, however," as Gregory says, "it is stated in opposition to this, that he has neither metropolitan nor patriarch, it must also be said that the case must then be heard and settled by the Apostolic See, which is the head of all the churches." ⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Ep. III, 6 (MGH 1, 165).

⁵¹ Ep. IV, 16 (MGH 1, 249).

⁵² Ep. III, 30 (MGH 1, 188): "... apostolica sedes, Deo auctore, cunctis praelata constat ecclesiis. . .

⁵³ Ep. XIII, 50 (MGH 2, 416): Item post pauca: "Si autem a clerico aut alio quocumque aditio contra episcopum fiat propter quamlibet causam, apud sanctissimum eius metropolitam secundum sanctas regulas et nostras leges causa iudicetur. Et si quis iudicatis contradixerit, ad beatissimum archiepiscopum et patriarcham dioceseos illius referatur causa, et ille secundum canones et leges huic praebeat finem." Cf. Justinian, *Nov.* 123, c. 22; J. Eidenschink, *6p. cit.*, 69ff.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*: Contra hoc si dictum fuerit, quia nec metropolitam habuit nec

No church was considered outside the scope of Papal jurisdiction. Even the patriarch of Constantinople, the bishop of New Rome, was his subject. In fact, as Gregory declared, the bishop of Constantinople readily conceded this.

As to what they say about the Church of Constantinople, who can doubt that it is subject to the Apostolic See? The most pious lord the emperor, and our brother the bishop of that city, continually acknowledge this. Yet if this church or any other has anything good, I am prepared to imitate even my inferiors in what is good, though prohibiting them from what is unlawful. For he is foolish who, because he considers himself the first, spurns to learn more about what he has come to recognize as good.⁵⁵

The foundation for Gregory's claim to the primacy of authority has its basis in the words of Christ's commission to St. Peter. His use of the Gospel texts, stating the commission given to the prince of the apostles, carries with it the thought that these words are meant in an equal sense for the See of Rome. Such a use of the *Tu es Petrus* text is found in his letter addressed to the empress Leontia:

Perhaps I should have asked your Serenity to hold, as especially committed to your care, the Church of blessed Peter the apostle, which up to the present has labored under the burden of grave plots . . . For the more you fear the Creator of all things, the more fully are you able to love the Church of him to whom it has been said: *You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.* And to whom it is said: *To you I will give the keys of the kingdom of Heaven; and whatsoever you will bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven; and whatsoever you will loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven.*⁵⁶

patriarcham, dicendum est, quia a sede apostolica, quae omnium ecclesiarum caput est, causa audienda ac fuerat dirimenda. . . . Cf. P. Batiffol, *St. Grégoire le Grand*, 157ff.

⁵⁵ *Ep. IX*, 26 (*MGH* 2, 60): Nam de Constantinopolitana ecclesia quod dicunt, quis eam dubitet sedi apostolicæ esse subiectam? Quod et piissimus domnus imperator et frater noster eiusdem civitatis episcopus adsidue profitentur. Tamen si quid boni vel ipsa vel altera ecclesia habet, ego et minores meos, quos ab illicitis prohibeo, in bono imitari paratus sum. Stultus est enim qui in eo se primum existimat, ut bona quae viderit, discere contemnat. Cf. L. Hartmann, *Ep. V*, 37 n.; *Ep. VI*, 15, n. 4.

⁵⁶ *Ep. XIII*, 42 (*MGH* 2, 405): Rogare forsitan debui, ut ecclesiam beati

There is, however, a letter of Gregory written to Eulogius, patriarch of Alexandria, which seems to raise a difficulty, as may be seen from the words of Dudden:

It should be further observed that in the heat of the "Ecumenical" controversy, Gregory put forward a remarkable, and, as far as I know, an entirely original theory of the See of Peter, which would scarcely have commended itself to St. Leo. He maintained that whereas Antioch had been the See of Peter before he came to Rome, and whereas Alexandria had become the See of Peter through his disciple and vicar St. Mark, therefore Rome, Antioch, and Alexandria conjointly represented the See of the Prince of the Apostles, and shared equally in the primacy that belonged to it as such.⁵⁷

Portions of this passage have been cited where the sequence of thought demanded. Here, however, it is given in its entirety.

Your most gracious holiness has spoken much to me in your letters about the *cathedra Petri* of the prince of the apostles, saying that he now sits in it in the person of his successors. And, indeed, I acknowledge that I am unworthy, not only in the honor of those who preside, but even among the number of those who stand. But all that has been said I willingly accept, for he has spoken to me of the *cathedra Petri*, who also holds a *cathedra Petri*. And though I do not delight in special honors, nevertheless, I am extremely happy because your holiness has given to yourself what you have bestowed on me. For who is ignorant that holy Church is established on the firmness of the prince of the apostles, in whose name is expressed the firmness of his mind, being called Peter from rock? To him it is said by the voice of the Truth: *I will give you the keys of the kingdom of Heaven.* And again it is said to him: *And when you are*

Petri apostoli, quae nunc usque gravibus insidiis laboravit, haberet vestra tranquillitas specialiter commendatam Quanto enim plus timetis conditorem omnium, tanto eius potestis ecclesiam amplius amare, cui dictum est: *Tu es Petrus, et super hanc petram aedificabo ecclesiam meam, et portae inferi non praevalebunt adversus eam* et cui dicitur: *Tibi dabo claves regni caelorum; quaecumque ligaveris super terram, ligatum erit et in caelo, et quaecumque solveris super terram, soluta erunt et in caelo.* Matt. xvi. 18-9.

⁵⁷ F. H. Dudden, *St. Gregory the Great*, II, 226. Cf. also J. Barmby, *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, (2nd series), vol. 12, Prolegomena, XII.

converted, confirm your brethren. And again: *Simon, son of John, do you love me? Feed my sheep.* Therefore, though there are many apostles, yet in regard to the *principatus*, only the See of the prince of the apostles has grown in authority, which is one in three places. For he himself exalted the See in which he deigned to rest and end the present life. He honored the See to which he sent his disciple as an evangelist. He strengthened the See in which he sat for seven years, though he was to depart from it. Since, therefore, it is the See of one, and one See, over which by divine authority three bishops now preside, whatever good I hear about you, I also impute to myself. If you believe any good about me, impute this to your merits, because in Him all of us are one, Who says: *That all may be one, even as You, Father, in Me and I in You; that they may be one in us.*⁵⁸

These words of Gregory, taken as a whole, should not be considered a mere tactical strategy in opposition to the title of *oecumenical patriarch*. Such an opinion is expressed by Dudden when

⁵⁸ Ep. VII, 37 (MGH 1, 485-6): *Suavissima mihi sanctitas vestra multa in epistolis suis de sancti apostolorum principis Petri cathedra locuta est dicens, quod ipse in ea nunc usque in suis successoribus sedeat. Et quidem ego indignum me esse non solum in honore praesidentium, sed etiam in numero stantium agnosco. Sed cuncta quae dicta sunt in eo libenter accepi, quod ille mihi de Petri cathedra locutus est, qui Petri cathedram sedet. Et cum me specialis honor nullo modo delectet, valde tamen laetatus sum, quia vos, sanctissimi, quod mihi impendistis vobismetipsis dedistis. Quis enim nesciat sanctam ecclesiam in apostolorum principis soliditate firmatam, qui firmitatem mentis traxit in nomine, ut Petrus a petra vocaretur? cui veritatis voce dicitur: Tibi dabo claves regni caelorum. Cui rursus dicitur: Et tu aliquando conversus confirma fratres tuos et iterum: Simon Iohannis amas me? Pasce oves meas. Unde et cum multi sint apostoli, pro ipso tamen principatu sola apostolorum principis sedes in auctoritate convaluit, quae in tribus locis unus est. Ipse enim sublimavit sedem, in qua etiam quiescere et praesentem vitam finire dignatus est; ipse decoravit sedem in quam evangelistam discipulum misit; ipse firmavit sedem, in qua septem annis, quamvis discessurus, sedet. Cum ergo unus atque una sit sedes, cui ex auctoritae divina tres nunc episcopi praesident, quicquid ego de vobis boni audio, hoc mihi imputo; si quid de me boni creditis, hoc vestris meritis imputate, quia in illo unum sumus qui ait: Ut omnes unum sint, sicut et tu, pater, in me et ego in te, ut ipsi in nobis unum sint. Matt. 16: 19. Luke 22: 32. Jo. 21: 17. Cf. L. Hartmann, Ep. VI, 58 n.2; H. Grisar, "Oekumenischer Patriarch und Diener der Diener Gottes," ZKT 4 (1880), 512ff.*

he exclaims: "The theory, it seems likely, commended itself to Gregory, less on account of its merits than as a means of winning the adherence of the Apostolic Patriarchs in the controversy with the See of Constantinople, which had itself no claim to be considered apostolic."⁵⁹

Nor can Gregory's thought be taken as an entirely original theory. As Casper observes, the words of Gregory seem but a restatement of the old theory of the three Petrine Sees. "The idea of solidarity with the person addressed, led him to the old theory of the three Petrine Sees."⁶⁰

At the first Council of Nicaea (325), special provision had been made for the See of Alexandria and that of Antioch. In the first part of its famous sixth canon, the Council decreed that the ancient custom prevailing in Egypt, Libya, and Pentapolis, was to be maintained. The bishop of Alexandria was to continue to have supervision over these provinces. As for the church of Antioch and those of the other provinces, each church was to continue to retain its prerogatives.⁶¹ According to the seventh canon, the See of Jerusalem was to have the rank after the See of Antioch.⁶² As Chapman remarks: "Just when Eusebius was publishing his History the council of Nicaea made a canon concerning the rights of metropolitans, confirming the superior rights of Alexandria, and justifying them by those exercised in Italy by Rome; it adds that Antioch is parallel—'and similarly with the other eparchies.' Another canon confirms to Jerusalem an honorary primacy, though it remains under Caesarea. Thus Nicaea mentions by name only the Sees of Rome, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem, and all that we know of history between 221 and 325 confirms the idea that no other sees approached these in dignity and importance."⁶³

The Council of Nicaea did not intend to speak of the Roman

⁵⁹ F. H. Dudden, *St. Gregory the Great*, II, 227-8.

⁶⁰ E. Caspar, *Geschichte des Papsttums*, II, 461: Der Gedanke der Solidarität mit den Adressaten, führte ihn auf die alte Theorie von den drei petrinischen Stühlen. *Ibidem*, I, 248, 362.

⁶¹ Council of Nicaea, Canon VI (EH 406). Cf. L. Duchesne, *Origenes du culte chrétien* (Paris 1898); T. Jalland, *The Church and the Papacy*, 201.

⁶² Council of Nicaea, Canon VII (EH 407).

⁶³ J. Chapman, *Studies on the Early Papacy*, 14.

supremacy. Its concern was the metropolitan Sees in the East which ruled over suffragan bishops. Still the importance of the three Petrine Sees is more than obvious. "Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, these are recognized as already the three chief sees, and after the Council of Chalcedon, their bishops are known as patriarchs."⁶⁴ Allies draws a further inference:

"Let the ancient custom be maintained," are the words which it uses in mentioning that prerogative of the Alexandrine see which it is maintaining, but which it is not conferring, and which it justifies by reference to the practice of Rome as the rule and type, whilst it would have it maintained at Antioch also, with the privileges of metropolitans generally in the other provinces. The preeminence which has its norm in the Roman See, and its largest exercise after Rome in the other two sees of Peter, and which is further carried out in the connection of metropolitans with their suffragans through the various provinces of the Church, certainly suggests the conclusion that Peter is the source of whatever dignity, over and above the simple episcopate, belongs to the patriarchal, exarchal, or metropolitan rank It may be asked why does St. Gregory in writing to the patriarch of Alexandria on the unity of the three sees of Peter solemnly introduce the three great words of our Lord to Peter which contain the special grant of his primacy? Is it not because the Church from the beginning connected the metropolitan authority, in its highest degree, which is the patriarchal, immediately with the person of Peter? He intimates that the hierarchy itself, in which the patriarchs above all illustrated the principle of headship and subordination, was a emanation from the Primacy. The episcopal dignity being in itself equal in all who held it, its subordination in its various ranks, and the unity of the whole mass centered in its supreme holder, are the direct result of the grant made in these three words to Peter. For St. Gregory says: "Though there be many apostles, yet in virtue of its very principate only the see of the Prince of the Apostles received supreme authority." Accordingly the reference to the three great words is most pertinent.

But we can trace this idea of St. Gregory the Great back through many generations. Pope Innocent (*Ep.* XXIV), nearly two hundred years earlier than St. Gregory, and only ninety years after the Nicene Council, recognized the patriarchal right of the bishop of Antioch over his provinces by referring to this

⁶⁴ S. Scott, *The Eastern Churches and the Papacy*, 78.

Canon of the Nicene Council, which, he says, "singly expresses the mind of all bishops throughout the world"; and he adds, "We note that this privilege was given to Antioch not so much on account of the city's magnificence as because it is known to be the first seat of the first Apostle where the Christian religion received its name, where a great meeting of Apostles was held, and which would not yield to the see of the city of Rome, except that the latter rejoices in having received and retained to the end that honor which the former obtained only in transition."⁶⁵

The question of preeminence took on another aspect by reason of the third canon of the First General Council of Constantinople (381). It decreed that the bishop of Constantinople should have the preeminence of honor after the bishop of Rome, for Constantinople was the New Rome.⁶⁶ This canon attempted to destroy the approved hierarchical status that had been implicitly approved by the sixth canon of the Nicene Council. It was, therefore, prejudicial to the Sees of Alexandria and Antioch which had been ranked second and third. Rome refused to accept this arrangement because it ignored a sanctioned and ancient custom.

The prestige of the See of Constantinople continued to mount, and a canon, usually called the twenty-eighth, was introduced and accepted at the sixteenth session of the Council of Chalcedon (451).

⁶⁵ T. Allies, *The Throne of the Fisherman* (London 1887), 52-55. Baronius, *Annales* (Luca 1738), vol. I, an. 39, no. xvi, 250: Cum vero ex adverso sedes Alexandrina, in qua aliquando fuisse Petrum, certa aliqua assertione nequaquam monstrari potest, post Romanam sedem omnium maxima ab eo fuerit instituta: plane perspicue intelligi posse videtur, non praesentiam Petri, sed eius potissimum requisitam esse auctoritatem ad constituendam sedem aliquam Patriarchalem. S. Scott, *The Eastern Churches and the Papacy*, 252, note: "This further comment of Baronius is also of considerable weight: 'The fact of the see of Alexandria—which there is no proof that Peter ever visited—being made by him the greatest of all after that of Rome, shows us plainly that it was not his presence, but his authority especially, that was necessary to constitute any church or (a) patriarchal see.' For, as Baronius previously remarks, if it had been Peter's presence that made a Primatial Church, there would have been as many patriarchal sees as there were Churches formed by the apostles—which would be doubtless many."

⁶⁶ Council of Constantinople of 381, *Canon 3* (EH 648). Cf. H. Schroeder, *Disciplinary Decrees of the General Councils* (St. Louis 1937), 65ff.; A. Fliche-V. Martin, *Histoire de l'église III* (Paris 1945), 290, 439-441.

It gave the See of Constantinople the ordination of metropolitans throughout the dioceses of Pontus, Asia, and Thrace. It implied that the primacy of the Roman See was due to the decision of men; and decreed that it followed the interpretation of the third canon of Constantinople in conferring on the See of Constantinople the same ecclesiastical privileges as those enjoyed by the Roman See.⁶⁷ This decree was never approved by Pope Leo the Great nor by the Roman See. In writing to the emperor, Marcion, Leo stated his refusal to change the law of the canons.⁶⁸

Officially, therefore, the Roman Pontiffs acknowledged and protected the honor due the two Petrine Sees of Alexandria and Antioch. The bishops of Constantinople, however, continued to consolidate their position, and used the twenty-eighth canon of Chalcedon as law. "The Popes protested. Especially in the last decade of the fifth century the letters of Gelasius I were characteristically vigorous and uncompromising: Byzantium is a mere bishopric subject to the metropolitan of Heraclea; the first, second, and third sees were instituted by St. Peter, and the rank and prerogatives claimed by New Rome are usurpations against justice and law. But when reunion came under Justin I in 519 Pope Hormisdas drops this argument, and tacitly allows the importance and influence of the bishop of Constantinople . . . Justinian makes laws about the five Patriarchs, and gives Constantinople the second place, thus enforcing the Chalcedonian law, regardless of the annulling by St. Leo and the indignation of his successors. The Popes are satisfied that Justinian made them governors of the whole Church, and they make no protest against the tyrannical Emperor, whom it was dangerous to contradict."⁶⁹

⁶⁷ J. Chapman, *Studies on the Early Papacy*, 23ff.; T. Jalland, *The Church and the Papacy*, 308.

⁶⁸ Leo I, *Ep.* 104 (*PL* 54, 995): *Privilegia enim Ecclesiarum, sanctorum Patrum canonibus instituta, et venerabilis Nicaenae synodi fixa decretis, nulla possunt improbitate convelli, nulla novitate mutari. In quo opere, auxiliante Christo, fideliter exsequendo, necesse est me perseverantem exhibere famulatum.* Cf. also: *Jaffé*, 482. A. Fliche-V. Martin, *Histoire de l'église IV* (Paris 1945), 266, 274.

⁶⁹ J. Chapman, *Studies in the Early Papacy*, 24. Cf. Fliche-Martin, *op. cit.*, IV, 440.

From Justinian's time, and accepted by imperial law, there had been the ever present opinion that the Church was ruled through the medium of the five patriarchs (Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem). Gregory in his official correspondence accepted this *ordo sedium*, as is to be judged from the letter announcing his elevation to the papacy:

Gregorius Iohanni Constantinopolitano, Eulogio Alexandrino, Gregorio Antioceno, Iohanni Hierosolimitano, et Anastasio expatriarcha Antiochiae a paribus.⁷⁰

In the private letter to Eulogius, however, the situation is otherwise. Here Gregory speaks of the old notion of the three principal and Petrine Sees (Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch), each in some way considered a *cathedra Petri*.⁷¹ If one searches through papal documents before the period of Gregory the Great, two parallel quotations are to be found. The first is from the *Decretum Gelasianum* and speaks of the three Petrine Sees. The second is the statement of John II, patriarch of Constantinople, and speaks of unity.

The older position of the three Petrine Sees, as found in the *Decretum Gelasianum*, which may contain material dating as far back as Damasus,⁷² states that the Roman Church has the *princi-*

⁷⁰ *Ep.* 1, 24 (*MGH* 1, 28). Cf. P. Batiffol, *Saint Grégoire le Grand*, 184. The expatriarch Anastasius of Antioch had been deposed by the emperor Justin II, in 570. Cf. P. Ewald, *Ep.* 1, 7 (*MGH* 1, 9, note). Gregory of Antioch died in 593, and Anastasius was restored to office.

⁷¹ L. Duchesne, *The Churches Separated from Rome* (trans. by A. Mathew, London, 1907), 112: "In Justinian's time and after him, we often meet with the opinion that the Church is presided over by five Patriarchs, and this notion has been kept up by Byzantine law. At Rome it was accepted in official language, but without enthusiasm, as being a novelty, and in her documents there is no mention of five Sees before the pontificate of Vigilius (537-555), when the Byzantine restoration took place in Italy, and many endeavors were made by the imperial court to regulate ecclesiastical affairs. St. Gregory the Great announced his accession to the four Patriarchs of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem. That did not prevent him from keeping up, in his private correspondence, the old notion of three Patriarchs (Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch) seated on the same chair of St. Peter."

⁷² Cf. S. Scott, *The Eastern Churches and the Papacy*, 140ff.; T. Jalland,

patet, not by decision of a council, but by reason of the commission given to Peter through the *Tu es Petrus* text.

The first See of Peter the apostle is the Church of Rome, *having no spot nor wrinkle or any such thing*. The second See was consecrated at Alexandria in the name of blessed Peter by Mark, his disciple and evangelist . . . Moreover the third See of the most blessed Apostle at Antioch is held in honor because he dwelt there before he came to Rome . . . ⁷³

The similar declaration, as to unity, is the assertion of Bishop John II, patriarch of Constantinople, found in his submission to Pope Hormisdas. Speaking of this passage Scott declares: "But John could hardly claim a share in all the privileges of old Rome. For example, Constantinople was not a See of Peter. When John prefaced to the Formula: 'For I hold the most holy Churches of your elder and of our new Rome to be one Church; I define that see of the Apostle Peter and this of the imperial city to be one see,' he might be simply expressing the oneness of faith and closeness of union in a striking manner just as Gregory the Great speaks of the oneness of Antioch, Alexandria and Rome." ⁷⁴

Having considered the history of the importance of the three Petrine Sees up to the time of Gregory the Great, and comparing his statement with parallel quotations of the past, a judgment may be passed on the words of Gregory written to the patriarch of Alexandria. There are in the lengthy utterance of Gregory two char-

The Church and the Papacy, 255ff.; P. Batiffol, *Le siège apostolique*, 146ff. The text is edited by E. von Dobschütz, "Decretum Gelasianum," *TU* 38 (1912).

⁷³ *Decretum Gelasianum* 3, 3 (*TU* 38, 32): Est ergo prima Petri apostoli sedes Romana Ecclesia non habens maculam nec rugam nec aliquid eiusmodi (Eph. V, 27). Secunda autem sedes apud Alexandriam beati Petri nomine a Marco eius discipulo atque euangelista consecrata est . . . Tertia vero sedes apud Antiochiam beatissimi apostoli Petri habetur honorabilis, eo quod illic priusquam Romae venisset habitavit. . . .

⁷⁴ S. Scott, *The Eastern Churches and the Papacy*, 221. Ep. 61 (A. Thiel, *Epistolae*, I, 852): Sanctissimas enim Dei ecclesias, id est superioris vestrae et novellae istius Romae, unam esse accipio; illam sedem apostoli Petri et istius augustae civitatis unam esse definio. Cf. also H. Grisar, *History of Rome*, II, 251; P. Batiffol, *Catholicism and the Papacy* (trans. O. R. Vassall-Phillips), 123.

acteristics. There is, first of all, a restatement of the solidarity of the three Petrine Sees; and secondly, a stress on the unity of the Church. It would be, as Caspar observes, a stress on the *una ecclesia* concept formerly propounded by St. Cyprian.⁷⁵ It would also seem that Gregory was of the opinion that the dignity of the Sees of Alexandria and Antioch, as *patriarchates*, depended on their connection with St. Peter. This would be the explanation as offered by Grisar:

According to this explanation of the origin of the Patriarchates, which was to be repeated by later Popes, such as Gelasius and Gregory I, it was the hallowed name of Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, and the dignity of his See which gave unity to the different chief dioceses of the Church . . . Evidently the idea prevailed at Rome and in the West, and with good reason, that the superiority of the Patriarchs had its foundation in a closer share of the power and dignity of the center and source of Church unity at Rome, and was not the outcome of the successful efforts at self-aggrandisement of the Patriarchs themselves, or of the political rank of their sees . . . As, according to it (the mentioned idea), these two greatest of the Eastern bishoprics appear as, in a certain sense, sees of Peter, the Roman successors of Peter have no ground for any jealousy against them. On the contrary, they enjoy and share the honor pertaining to those sees. The patriarchal dignity, so far from being a source of discord, will be strengthened and confirmed by the holder of the Roman See. As the East makes a loud and joyous confession of the unity of the Church, we cannot but take it that the preeminence of the patriarchs is founded upon a certain derivative

⁷⁵ E. Caspar, *Geschichte des Papsttums*, II, 461-2: . . . auch hier erfuhr die Lehre vom Primat eine Akzentverschiebung, welche den alten cyprianischen *una ecclesia*-Begriff, der bei Leo d. Gr. sehr *römisch* umgebogen war, in seiner ursprünglichen Gestalt neu belebte. Man darf das nicht als blosse Taktik für den nächsten Zweck, die gemeinsame Front gegen den *universalis*-Titel, abtun, es war vielmehr tief in Gregors d. Gr. religiöser Amtsauffassung begründet. Dieser Mann, der nach Herkunft und Natur so *römisch* empfand, dachte doch zugleich so *urchristlichökumenisch* wie vielleicht niemand seit Cyprian, und solcher Geist hätte, wenn er allgemein zum Durchbruch gekommen wäre, die tiefs Entfremdung zwischen Ost und West, welche reichskirchliche Entwicklung dort, *römisch*-papstliche Entwicklung hier seit zwei Jahrhunderten geschaffen hatte, vielleicht noch einmal mit dem cyprianischen *Kitt der Eintracht* heilen können.

authority which they have from Peter's plenitude of power. All acknowledged that Christ did not found three Churches, but only one, and that as a living, perfect society which, consequently, can have but one Head.⁷⁶

Furthermore, the statement of Gregory did not imply that he denied the Roman See alone possessed the *principatus* over all the churches. He looked on the Roman See as the *caput omnium ecclesiarum* and the *caput fidei*. As Batiffol declares:

Saint Gregory did not sacrifice any part of the *principatus* inherited from Saint Peter. He claimed it, however, with a manifest anxiety less he interfere with the right of another in holding his privilege. This is very noticeable in his relations with Alexandria and Antioch. Some have made this a pretext for saying Gregory considered this apostolic *principatus* as being possessed by the Sees of Alexandria and Antioch, and that this concession enabled him to obtain the aid of Alexandria and Antioch in his campaign against the oecumenical pretensions of the patriarch of Constantinople (Dudden, *Gregory the Great*, II, 227). An examination of the texts which one can bring forth, proves, above all, the deference with which Gregory treated the See of Alexandria and the See of Antioch, both of which were apostolic. But the sincere and skillful humility of Saint Gregory does not harm the privilege of his own proper See, and nowhere do we find that he actually attributed this prerogative to other Sees than his own. Saint Peter honored (decoravit) the See of Alexandria by giving it his disciple, Saint Mark. He strengthened (firmavit) the See of Antioch where he reigned for seven years. And he exalted (sublimavit) the See of Rome which had been the term of his life and the place of his death.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ H. Grisar, *History of Rome*, I, 340-1.

⁷⁷ P. Batiffol, *Saint Grégoire le Grand*, 188: Quant au *principatus* hérité de saint Pierre, saint Grégoire n'en sacrifie rien. Il le revendique cependant avec le souci manifeste de n'inquiéter aucun droit par ce privilège. C'est très sensible dans ses rapports avec Alexandrie et Antioche. On en a pris prétexte de dire que Grégoire concevait ce *principatus* apostolique comme possédé aussi bien par le siège d'Alexandrie et le siège d'Antioche, et que cette concession lui servait à s'assurer le concours d'Alexandrie et d'Antioche dans sa campagne contre le patriarche à prétention oecuménique de Constantinople (Dudden, *St. Gregory the Great*, II, 227). L'examen des textes que l'on peut alléguer prouve surtout la déférence avec laquelle Grégoire traite le siège

Consequently, once it is conceded that Gregory did not deny the Roman Pontiff his supreme prerogative of being the *caput omnium ecclesiarum*, it is but normal that he should write to the patriarch of Alexandria and warn him to wipe out the heresy of simony: "For the absolution of your own soul, for the increase of a reward, and that your works may be found perfect in the sight of the terrible Judge, hasten to destroy and efface from your See (which is also ours) the heresy of simony, which was the first to arise in the Church."⁷⁸

In conclusion, then, it may be said that in the thought of St. Gregory the Great the See of Rome held the primacy of jurisdiction. Gregory considered himself the successor of St. Peter in the Roman See, for Peter lived on in his own person. The *principatus* of Peter is thus perpetuated, and his prerogatives become the prerogatives of Gregory as the Bishop of Rome. As a consequence, the Bishop of Rome is the supreme head of the Church.

d'Antioche ■ le siège d'Alexandrie, tous deux apostoliques, mais l'humilité sincère, et habile, de saint Grégoire, ne fait pas tort au privilège de son propre siège, et nulle part nous ne voyons qu'il attribue vraiment ce privilège à d'autres sièges que le sien. Saint Pierre a honoré (decoravit) le siège d'Alexandrie en lui donnant l'évangéliste saint Marc, son disciple; il a affermi (firmavit) le siège d'Antioche en y siégeant sept années; il a exalté (sublimavit) le siège de Rome qui a été le terme de sa course et le lieu de sa mort.

⁷⁸ Ep. XIII, 44 (MGH 2, 407): Unde pro absolutione animae vestrae atque pro augmento mercedis vestrae, ut ante conspectum tremendi iudicis vestra in omnibus perfecta sint opera, festinare debetis simoniacam heresem, qua prima in ecclesia exorta est, sanctissima sede vestra, quae nostra est, funditus evellere atque eradicare.

OUTLINE OF COMPLETE DISSERTATION

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